Dreary

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Chapter 1

As he lay, contemplating the events of yesterday evening's dreadful yet meaningful walk through the gloomy wind-whistling woods that lined the path between his small forest cabin home and the rest of civilization, Heartin Kentron, an athletic young man with reddish brown skin and short black hair, tossed and turned on his pillow, jostling about the comforts of his bed-ish grave. Every year around this time there is an athletic competition of intellect and endurance, a competitive arrangement intended to test and showcase the incredible natural and mutant capabilities of the youthful inhabitants of the planet. Heartin participated in the preliminary round of this competitive demonstration of evolutionary efforts and due to a loss of self control and a rather embarrassing accident failed to complete the given course while simultaneously ruining the chances of several other competitors and was duly disqualified from participation, or so he thought. Heartin was not favored to perform exceedingly well by the officiating committee, nor analyst, nor the crowd or skeptics at hand anticipating the outcome of the competition, but even still, by his own considerations of his capabilities which he assumed would give him an advantage in competition, his shortcomings in this showcase, despite the invigorating moments following the match, could be described as an unfortunately dismal and utterly dreary performance to say the least.

Heartin lived in a small cream colored egg-shaped home that was made out of Pollydroop, an easily moldable artificial substance consisting of polyethylene and clay, elevated on a single golf-tee shaped pillar in the middle of a grassy patch in the Solareen Woods. The home was lent to him by family friends for the purpose of housing him through his studies and tournament

preparation. The Pollydroop home had a logo etched into the lower half of its egg shape, right above the top of its pillar conjunction. “DOZENTH” it read in large tan letters that formed a thin shiny imprint in the structure. Precipitating notions of carnal lust dripped their way from cloudy imaginative formations that hung over the head of the lying contemplator and his dotting of a personally contrived emotional solution to life’s disillusion made its falling entrance propagating itself with a cinematic reeling.

Heartin stopped shifting in his bed and lay with his eyes open and his hands supporting his head on his pillow. Heartin, who was wearing a brown and red tribal patterned t-shirt, khaki pants, and red socks, looked up at the plain Pollydroop ceiling as if it were a movie projector that illuminated the thoughts of his mind, his memories of failure, and his dreams of a self-comforting alternate reality in which he had put forth an impressive captivating demonstration of athletic agility and strategic prowess in the preliminary round of The AllEarth Mutantologist Evolutionary Athletics and Intelligence Tournament, simply referred to as The AMEs. The AllEarth Corporation was the first organization to successfully fuse a human's DNA with a plant organism, creating a bark covered tree-man who died years ago, and then a girl with the DNA of a tortoise, giving the girl an incredibly long life span which continues to this day. After the creation of “enhanced” humans was normalized, The AllEarth Corporation took responsibility of creating a separate governing society for the rights of these beings in a joint effort with the already established human government and a tournament was implemented as a way of introducing those new creations to their respective communities in hopes of giving these special humans a smooth transition into societal living. However, Heartin’s performance was anything but

smooth and the blurry moments he could recall of the events replayed on the ceiling projector while Heartin went through a range of emotions internally ranging from angry to sad to hysterical to aroused to ashamed and all the way back again. His golden yolk-colored Pollydroop bed, cream foam mattress, and white sheets, acted as an encompassing oasis and fortress protecting him from the judgment of the outside world. Heartin had lost control before, but this was different, and on this night he had contented himself with laying there until his reality and the projected dream became one soul easing fully formed realization of a fabricated truth, however the actuality of the rueful experience had a sugar coating that shelled the unfortunate events in the distracting emotionally dissipating prideful surprise personification and materialization of an overwhelming and unsuspectingly tangible feeling of an experience called love. Heartin's projection helped ease his demeanor and he was moments away from falling off the cliff of consciousness into a rapturous sleep. He closed his eyes to dream the night away, but that plan of running away to the semi-reality of his imagination was thwarted by a distant sound of rustling in the surrounding woods.

Heartin looked around and could see the moonlight shining in through the blue stained glass window of his bedroom and the refraction of light gleamed throughout the room giving the space a serene aquatic atmosphere which contrasted the wanderings of his anxious mind. The furniture, a small couch, dresser drawer, lamp, bed, trash bin, and large holographic mural of a paradisiacal sunrise, all shown, glistening in the illumination of light blue light.

"Wakulla." Heartin whispered to himself the name of his lover in conception, a heart-throbbing goddess like entity that was

floating through his busy brain. Wakulla sporadically appeared to him and then disappeared once, then twice, and then three times over, hazily interceding herself into and out of Heartin’s daydream. Wakulla's salamander pink skin had an orange undertone and seemed to illuminate from within with a golden hue like a burning sun, shining and hovering in the midst and her aquatic bluish green eyes twinkled and pierced the evening glow. Her hair was a pretty dark green with light green streaks. Wakulla’s essence was “oragisail” which means it was like that of a steamy illusory oasis that could all be wiped away with the blink of an eye. His feeling of embarrassment which caused his avoidance of tournament festivities was superseded by the angst of possibly never reconnecting with the muse of the oragisail apparition was enough for him to question possibly removing himself from a breathing continuation of living participation.

Wakulla's image appeared to Heartin as only a head and torso and she leaned into him, replaying the pleasant moment of yesterday's kiss gifted upon Heartin’s right cheek right above the chin. The kiss lit up as a private movie on Heartin’s ceiling projector and its vision twinkled bright blue above him as it mingled with the room's engulfing blue tint. Boom! Boom! Boom! A loud knocking, rumbled and shook the entirety of Heartin’s elevated domicile as if an earthquake had shook the room.

“What in the pollydroop?” Heartin thought to himself.

Wakulla's image disappeared and Heartin sat up in his bed. “Heartin!” a loud voice called out to him. Before Heartin could respond he heard the alarming noise of the walls crackling. A faint melting line was drawn throughout the circumference of the walls

of the room. The line was the result of the Pollydroop structure being heated to a melting point and cut through as if an internal horizon had sliced through the home's entirety which caused a gooey division in the walls of the construction. There was a momentary pause and then a swift sticky separation. The top half of Heartin’s elevated domicile lifted into the air revealing the layout of his small spherical home in its entirety. Startled, Heartin jumped from his bed and landed in the center of his bedroom floor.

Heartin’s body immediately undertook its compulsory adrenergic reaction. His pupils dilated, the whites of his eyes turned black, and his body grew from his everyday height of three and three tenths enures (a newly introduced volemic system of measuring height introduced by The AME committee) to three and six tenths which translated to five feet and five inches to five feet and ten inches in previously conformed systems of measurement if converted. His dark red colored skin toughened and purpled with a pinkish hue like that of some type of strange reptile. His arms, neck, back and legs covered themselves with a tough red exoskeleton that protruded from slits in his joints and skin which gave him a natural suit of armor. His nails changed in color from their usual clear appearance to black and lengthened a full four inches from almost nonexistence to scraping the Pollydroop floor beneath. The consistency of his muscles thickened and tightened, hardening like rocks. His feet remained their usual size of half an enure. Heartin was a reeptilorm, a term used to say Heartin’s DNA was infused with a breed of raptor before his birth which caused his physique to morph when overly excited, usually in the presence of imminent danger which in the given circumstances were correctly perceived and instantaneously inhibited.

Before him, from the grassy patch surrounding The Dozenth, stood a giant human being of twenty seven enures who held the upper half of Heartin’s egg-home in his right hand like a chef preparing an omelet breakfast. The giant was two enures taller than the majority of the red oaks of the Solareen Woods. Cursor, a genetically enhanced Solareenian giant with a scruffy beard, a mostly bald head, and white slightly tanned skin, incubated behind the mysterious walls of the AllEarth laboratory, draped in a large tan robe hemmed with gold, chiming with the sound of its brown beaded fringes, looked down into Heartin’s room from above. Cursor’s sandals were made from woven strands of leather ropes strapped to one another and fastened to wooden planks that supported the bottom of Cursor's foot and ankle. His shoes alone were large enough to bed any average sized human with ease. Cursor waved his hot hand in the air as he could feel the burning effect of having blown his hot breath on his finger nails to use them as blades to melt and cut through the Pollydroop. Cursor winced and then his enormous voice powered through once again.

“I'm hungry. And boy, you smell good!”

Cursor's voice rippled throughout the remaining Pollydroop cup in which Heartin stood and Heartin could feel the capillary effect of the waves crashing through to his bones. His hair flew back from the gust of wind caused by Cursor's breath and his body tensed as he readied himself to fight. Heartin opened his mouth wide and shrieked a horrific shriek. The ear piercing stab of the shriek was exalted at a completely disorienting frequency and

Cursor covered his ears after tossing the top half of Heartin’s egg home to the side where it landed near the trunk of a forest tree.

“There it is!” Cursor smiled, holding his ears. “You made me bleed.”

Heartin didn't respond.

“Ha, I scared you!”

Cursor laughed heartily, grabbing his big belly with both hands. “I have a question, little Reeptilorm, can you control that little trick?” he asked.

“It’s not a trick. And who are you?”

“Oh, lighten up you should.”

Cursor's giant finger came luring down towards Heartin as if we're about to squash a bug. As quick as a twitch, Heartin dashed from the middle of the room to a corner and then up one wall and sprung himself into the air. Cursor reached out and attempted to catch Heartin in the air like a player having thrown a small red ball in a game of jacks, looking to snatch it as it bounced into the air. He missed. Heartin continued to glide through the air, flipping three times over and landing on Cursor's shoulder. The giant reached for Heartin and he ran from Cursor's shoulder up one side of his neck where he grabbed Cursor’s ear and pulled himself up to the top of Cursor's head. Cursor reached to pull Heartin down from his crown, but Heartin slid down to his forehead and landed on a thick fold of skin on Cursor's brow.

There Heartin swung, now grasping the meaty part of Cursor's forehead.

“Come to make fun of me, have you?” Heartin asked as he looked Cursor in the eye.

Cursor used his right hand to reach for the young man and Heartin immediately let go, dropping to the grassy patch of the forest floor and rolling several feet away before hopping up in the air and landing on both feet. Heartin tilted his head up towards the luring giant who peered down at him.

“I recognize you. Watching on. I could see your head near the turret of the arena.”

“That was I,” the giant assured as he reached out his enormous hand to Heartin, near his own ankles.

“Cursor I am.”

Heartin didn't reach forward. He was afraid to be pulled up by the giant. Cursor pulled his hand back and stood tall.

“Can you tell me, precocious young friend, what exactly do you remember from your race today?”

Heartin looked down at the grassy patch. It all happened incredibly fast. Cursor gave him a minute to answer.

“What does it matter? I've been disqualified.”

“What if I told you that you have not been disqualified. And not only that. What if I told you that I could help you win?”

Heartin was skeptical to say the least, as his giant scout had anticipated. A personal vendetta, fueled by Cursor's own perceived shortcomings in AME competition, had led him into the treacherous woods and to Heartin’s home that had now been cracked in half. Cursor was not about to let this newfound opportunity, due to a serendipitous accident, pass him by. Heartin relaxed his tense body with his outer shell retracting to normal form. His muscles and nails shrunk back to their original positions.

“*Haven’t,* say you?" Heartin inquired.

“Well I found your unusual performance intriguing, and I immediately approached the competition’s governing committee about the results of the competition. Given my prestige and influence in The AllEarth Organization, once I had consulted a rather pivotal piece of undebatable indoctrinating documentation, simply called the rules, The AME Committee came to the merciful conclusion that you shan't be disqualified on account of your accidental interference in the race which, disappointingly, directly led to an undoubted impediment on the success of your fellow competitors and it must be considered that said interference had a major influence on the competition’s outcome which left the other competitors with a vehement belief that the race simply must be run again.”

Cursor bent down low, putting his hands on his knees, coming face to giant face with Heartin.

“And you,” Cursor said pointing his large finger in Heartin’s direction, “will only be allowed to compete under my close tutelage."

“Your tutelage?” Heartin asked confusingly. “So you have to be my coach?”

“Correct,” Cursor assured, “a stipulation enacted by me on account of my haggling on your behalf.”

“But I can't.” Heartin affirmed.

“Now before you adamantly disagree, an understandable reaction from someone in your particular potentially emotionally vexing set of circumstances in which your future is at compromise, I would beg of you, little sir, first, please come with me. Members of The AME
Committee have gathered at The Great Crater and your presence has been requested.”

Cursor gestured towards one of the wood's zig-zagging pathways.

“Oh, but first…” Cursor reached into the cup of The Dozenth that remained atop the pillar and pulled out a pair of brown leather sandals that were sitting by the bed. Cursor handed the shoes to Heartin and then picked up the upper half of The Dozenth and placed it back on the remaining cup of the home.

“Now, if it's alright with you, my new favorite client, off we go.”

Cursor stepped in the forest woods, pulling back its large branches to clear his path. Cursor paused for a moment to look back at Heartin who was putting on his sandals.

“Sure. Off we go.”

Cursor and Heartin, side by side, stepped into the forests’ nature abound.

The sky’s eyes which manifested themselves in the form of burning spheres with diametrical strands of light in observation of Solareenian wildlife and the colloquial discourse of natural organisms communicating their living artistic response to the puzzling paradox of essential nutritional satisfaction lying on the edge of immorality provoking the materialization of greed, a product of existence in a revolving process of birth, death, trade, and consumption. In another section of the Solareen Woods, bustling with naturally inhabiting wild creatures, the whistling wind sped its way through the trees like the swift motions of the Oglician Order, a team of black cloaked hunters, a band of constituents with their own interests in The AME Tournament. The atmospheric molecules were displaced and rearranged as they coolly brushed the senses in a partnership with the low level of humidity that cleansed the pours. The Oglician pack of six members were in pursuit of a wooloxicorn, a rare animal with a valuable skin, that the Oglicians had chosen for sport on this particular evening. A single wooloxicorn, separated from its flock, quickly stumbled its way through and around the thick vegetation as Briles, Tunton, Sorkin, Scorer and Eneed led by Fazor, an Oglician chieftain, a brown skinned man, an imposingly statured criminal trader of exotic game, strategically sprinted after the

wooloxicorn, athletically maneuvering their way through the woods seemingly as quick as light could shine. Fazor took the high road, jumping from the ground onto a nearby tree branch and swinging his way from branch to branch, hot on the wooloxicorn's trail. The black cloaks of the Oglicians, all of which were genetically enhanced humans with mutant animal capabilities, flapped and swayed briskly through the trees like shooting shadows and their black leather boots made a light stampede-like rumble as they tracked the wooloxicorn in a game of many cats and one mouse. In their black trousers, tied with black leather belts, and matching tactical vests, the unit could barely be seen, but if one were close enough to get a good look, they could make out the small colorful decorative patches stitched into their black cloaks and stuck to their black vests.

Fazor, a malicious conniver, an athletic man with a beard and low-cut hair on his head, soared from tree to tree forming a forceful black blur that shook the woods. He pridefully donned a small green and gold patch on his chest. The patch was made in the image of a golden eye in the bulb of a gold rose, a symbolic signifier of his Oglician Office. The Oglicians Order was originally a small band of thieves, the resulting products of various mutant alterations, and has built itself internally into a unified conglomerate of various criminal organizations notoriously involved in political bribery with dangerous associations to illegal markets economically driven by the sale of endangered species. The Oglician Order is known for breeding savage cold-hearted soldiers and Fazor was the most intense and tactically punctual chieftain of them all, however many members of The Oglician Order were everyday citizens and had no obligatory responsibilities when it came to committing crimes and decided to

leave the criminal operations of the organization to the chieftains and their selected gangs. Fazor grinned as he swung along, salivating with the thrill of the chase.

The frightened creature fled in haste, breathing and grunting heavily as it hurried on from the oncoming tracers. wooloxicorn are bullish stockily built creatures with valuable thick leathery skins that were an array of glistening dark colors and short bushy tails covered in thick wool. This particular wooloxicorn, a strong intelligent creature with a beautiful maroon hide and a puffy white tail, was reaching the limit of its endurance. wooloxicorn had the genetic construction of similar looking land mammals made to graze and do possess a stronger muscular structure than that of those same mammals in addition to dog-like paws and shoulder bones which gave it a natural speed advantage, but the circulatory system of wooloxicorn, unfortunately, wasn't designed for sprinting extended periods of time, leaving this wooloxicorn with little time to evade the gang of Oglicians.

Briles, a naturally gorgeous brown lanky girl with braided hair that came to her shoulders, lagging behind the rest of the running clan of Oglicians, took to the sky. She pulled off her cloak and held it in one arm. A pair of black wings sprouted from out of their tucked position on her back and into the air she leaped. Briles soared, closely above the trees, flapping her wings, keeping pace with her fellow gang members below. Scorer, a pale white skinned young man with his hair slicked back and dyed white, a genetically enhanced human with a physical construction that featured DNA of various land mammals like jaguars, leopards, panthers and such, heightened his pace, closing in on the wooloxicorn, but Eneed noticed the twisting path that lay ahead of

the wooloxicorn and ran to an upcoming turn to head the animal off as the wooloxicorn ran its way around a cluster of thorny bushes. Eneed, an aggressive competitor with a shrewd personality and oily olive skin, broad shoulders and a muscular build, a most physically intimidating woman, brought her running to an abrupt stop and slid on all fours for quite a long distance across the grass floor of the Solareen Woods, coming to a halt in front of the wooloxicorn which was now running directly at her. Eneed spread her arms wide, as if awaiting a big hug, hoping to catch the wooloxicorn in its path, but just as it approached Scorer roared and lunged for the animal.

“He’s mine!” Scorer yelled.

This startled the wooloxicorn causing it to momentarily freeze, skid forward and roll over to its side before once again finding its footing and speeding off in another direction. Scorer hurried after the wooloxicorn, first passing Eneed, who stood with her frustrated arms in the air. Scorer gave her a push, sending Eneed tumbling to the ground, her face landing in dirt, before he rushed off. “Dammit Scorer!” Eneed screamed as she pounded her fist into the dirt.

Tunton, a grey skinned rock of a man, tall, bald and muscular with a big belly and the horn of a rhinoceros for a nose, and Sorkin, a skinny tan young man of average height with black dreaded hair, gained on the fleeing wooloxicorn which was now headed in a direction perpendicular to their sprinting path. Tunton was in the lead and appeared as if he might be first to reach the animal. Tunton reached for his stinger, an electronic gun, holstered underneath his cloak as he ran furiously, pointing the

gun at the wooloxicorn. Before Tunton could pull the trigger, Fazor swooped down in front of him from a tree branch above, obstructing Tunton's view of his prey. Fazor took after the animal on foot with Tunton and Sorkin close behind. Briles continued to soar above and dipped down low nearing the tiring wooloxicorn. The Oglicians were now only paces away from catching their prey and it appeared as if Fazor or Briles would be the one to capture the animal, until Scorer came lunging out of a thicket of bushes, momentarily flying through the air, as he pulled a stinger clasp, a small device, designed to attach to its target and incapacitate with a vicious electric shock, from the utility pouch of his belt, aiming and throwing it at the running wooloxicorn. The stinger clasp landed on the right hip of the wooloxicorn and gave the animal a vibrating shock of fifty-five thousand volts. The body of the wooloxicorn stiffened and it fell to its side with a great thud, coming to a rough skid on the grassy ground. Scorer landed nearby. The running Oglicians came to a stop surrounding the animal. Scorer bent down to admire his catch, smiling a winning smile. Fazor approached the animal.

"Beautiful. A rare maroon wooloxicorn. The skin alone is worth forty-thousand crispies," Fazor beamed.

"Can we eat it?" Asked Tunton as he approached the wooloxicorn with Sorkin at his side. "Due a proper expensive meal aren't we?" Sorkin chimed in. "Forty-thousand crispies, a luxurious scrape of the plate." Tunton added. "Shut it! Eat your pants!" Fazor yelled. Tunton and Sorkin quieted as Briles came swooping down, landing near the rest of the crew. Fazor scornfully locked eyes with Briles in clear content of her lackadaisical effort in the hunt. Fazor had just opened his lips to begin his reprimand when

“Scorer!”, Eneed yelled from behind a tree. She bursted from behind the tree and in a furious rage quickly rushed towards Scorer, but, before she could reach him, Fazor put out a hand, pressing it to Eneed's shoulder.

“Calm yourself,” Fazor instructed. Eneed pulled Fazor’s hand away with her eyes still focused on Scorer. “He cheated!” Eneed furiously protested, intending to pay Scorer back for his push during their pursuit of the wooloxicorn, but before she could Fazor reached out again and this time he gave Eneed a stinging slap on her right cheek. “I said calm yourself,” Fazor insisted. Eneed turned to look Fazor in his eyes as she shook off the effect of the slap in an instant. It wasn't the first time Eneed had been slapped by a nefarious criminal mischief, and each blow coming from a man much stronger than Fazor; experiences Endeed thought of as she wiped her cheek. “The chase was expressly non-contact regarding other Order members,” Eneed pleaded. “You lost,” said Fazor. “You failed when you allowed him to cheat and get away with it.”

Fazor turned his attention to Briles who stood with her arms folded and her wings now tucked back underneath the cloak she threw over her shoulders and tied at the neck. “Briles, you had an opportunity to swoop down and capture the wooloxicorn. Should I take your hesitation as pity for your fellow Oglicians, a frivolous forfeit, a demonstration of your superiority, or a blatant show of indifference?” Briles didn't answer. Fazor continued. “Or did you suddenly grow a soft spot for wooloxicorn?” Briles remained quiet. “Answer me,” Fazor insisted, “You can fly for God's sake!” Briles smiled a most perturbed smile. “I got a cramp in my wing,” she answered. The gang of Oglicians snickered, all except for Fazor.

Fazor quickly approached Briles, coming to a stop just inches away from bumping right into her. Fazor reached out with one hand and placed it on the patch on Briles’s vest. “I don't think it's funny,” said Fazor. Briles stiffened. Fazor snatched the patch from her vest. “You are no longer team leader for tomorrow’s event,” Fazor explained as he tossed the patch to Scorer. “Let’s head out. Everyone to the truck. Tunton, grab the wooloxicorn. The rest of that herd couldn't have gotten far.” Tunton picked up the wooloxicorn in his arms and tossed it over one shoulder. The Oglicians trekked off through and out of the woods at a brisk walking pace.

CHAPTER 2

Heartin and Cursor were now in the thick of the tall red-leaf trees that made up the Solareen Woods. This collection of trees stretched two miles in any direction and The Dozenth sat very close to the center of those woods. The crowded leaves and branches were difficult for Cursor to step his way through. Cursor pushed the trees aside, occasionally tripping over the smaller plants, and in one treacherous step bumped into a large boulder of six enures, stubbing his big toe that hung over the edge of the sandal on his left foot. “Aw!” Cursor screamed and caught his footing, avoiding a great fall. Cursor picked up the boulder in his right hand and threw it with all of his might. The rock went flying through the air and out of sight, landing somewhere at an non-seeable distance. Cursor angrily stepped again right into the branch of a tree. The impact sent the giant stumbling back and grabbing his face. Cursor took a deep breath and wiped a dirty tear from his eye. Heartin, down below, was having a much easier time, having skipped through the woods on many occasions. Heartin quite easily pranced his way through the woods, jumping from boulder to boulder with ease, landing on the grassy patches and walking in between them. Cursor smiled, moderately impressed. “Slow down. I'm going to prick myself to death at this pace.” Heartin came to a stop atop a rock twice his size and made eye contact with the giant who was peering down. “So you helped make the Great Crater, you say?” Heartin asked.

“Yes, it was simple really. A few giant buddies of mine engaged in a slew of wooden barrels filled with frothy spirits and went rock pummeling in the Eastern Plain.”

“And Commissioner Emblemson is there now, waiting for me?”

“That's right. The press took a surprise interest in your mishap and Commissioner Emblemson sees it as a chance to improve human-mutant relations.”

“How so?”

“I’ll explain.”

Cursor took a careful step, and then another, and then another as he slowly continued on through the woods. Heartin jumped from atop the rock on which he stood and quickly pressed along, keeping by Cursor's side with very little fear of being crushed by the giant’s wooden bottomed shoes.

“Vonderick is your coach, correct?”

“He is.”

“Let's start there. Vonderick is an AME appointed coach for independent competitors, meant to give everyone in competition with a qualifying chance a fair set of fundamental practices under the AME guidelines. Meaning Vonderick’s expertise is in general athletics and he hasn't the resources to provide a more personal analytical diagnosis of the advantages and disadvantages of each mutant athlete's unique genus. I have already trained three reeptilorms in my illustrious fifty year career, all of which won enormous prizes. Your body's reaction during the obstacle race was not a fault of your own, but a failure on the behalf of The AME Committee in accordance with their stated attempt to give every

enhanced human a safe accommodating training environment. With Team Everforce and I you'll have nothing but the best.”

There are four different main categories of enhanced humans resulting from either scientific infusion or intercourse between two different mutant humans. There are Homolinians, those of animals with hair, Placosis, those with scales and other fish-like qualities, Avercees, those with feathers or wings, and, finally, Reeptilorms, a species featuring jurassic DNA. Any others fell into smaller lesser known or specified categories. The animal influences were often visible in ability more than physical structure so it was difficult to tell exactly what kind of animal DNA an enhanced human had based on their outward physical appearance. Each competing athlete was of a vastly different genetic makeup and they all needed specified training regiments to perform at their highest level. Heartin was aware of this, but still tentative in his response.

“Well I appreciate the thought, but I'm not sure how I feel being thrust into the spotlight on account of a mistake.”

The mistake, Heartin referred to, wasn't as much of a mistake as it was an ill timed reaction. Yesterday Heartin lined up amongst a handful of the most promising athletes in competition to compete in an obstacle course race in which style and strategic ingenuity were heavily considered in combination with finishing time in the unofficial public judging of each individual athlete. It was the last preliminary race for athletes attempting to qualify for the rest of the tournament. Heartin began the race in a calm quality sprint over the flat stretch of the track with his more human appearance on display, but the verbal jousting of a fellow

competitor and the loud thunderous screams of the crowd triggered the instinctual physically transformative qualities of his raptor genetics. Heartin shrieked a loud shriek and grew into his visibly reeptilorm form which strengthened his body, but engaged the more animalistic behaviors of his mind. Heartin sped near the front of the pack, ripping up the track, pulling out several rocks from the ensuing rock wall and tearing the netted field obstacle before stopping for a drink from the pool of the swimming line. He ultimately ended up in the lead just a few strides away from the finish line to the roaring delight of the crowd where he, unfortunately, got his long black toenails stuck in the muddy ground and went tumbling to the ground in a muddy heap. The officiating crew called the race to an end without declaring a winner due to the destruction of the obstacle course. Laslur, an Oglician athlete who got caught in the destroyed netted obstacle during the race, immediately called for Heartin's disqualification. "Get the reep out of here. You destroyed the whole track, weird little freak!" Laslur said to Heartin unbeknownst to the cheering crowd. "You'll be disqualified," he yelled. "There will be no need," Heartin responded, "I quit!" Heartin quickly exited The Obstacle Track Auditorium and then The Combat Stadium before running off towards The Dozenth. It was hardly an endorsable performance.

"Ah, but it is not I who requested your presence this evening," Cursor responded as he lifted his large index finger into the air, "It is Emblemson. Surely you must speak with the commissioner before making any decisions."

Heartin thought this over for a moment.

“Well, yes. If it's for the commissioner then attending would be best.”

Cursor and Heartin reached the end of the heavily treed woods and grassy plains that lay before them. The evening was nearing its end and the sky was glowing a tranquil peachy purple color with red rays streaking through the sky. The clouds seemed to blend into the colorful backdrop. Cursor stepped around the last tree with a sense of great relief and Heartin jumped from one last boulder, landing in the grass.

“Almost there.” Cursor said.

Heartin looked out at the ten miles of green grassy field in front of him.

“How so?” Heartin asked clearly befuddled. Cursor pulled one of his giant feet up to his mouth and bit off the toenail of the largest toe on his right foot. The bite left Cursor with a large crescent shaped toenail of two enures in his mouth. Cursor put his right foot back on the ground and spit the toenail into his left palm. Cursor bent down low on one knee and held out the large toenail for Heartin to take.

“Here take this,” Cursor instructed.

“What is this for?” Heartin asked.

“You'll see!”

In the blink of an eye, Cursor quickly used his right hand to scoop Heartin upwards and with a mighty twirl, spinning his entire body up and around, Cursor threw Heartin, shot-putting the reeptilorm and the toenail with all his might. Cursor ended his spin in a powerful pose with his arm outstretched before him.

“Huyah!”

“Ahhhhhhh!”

Cursor let out a scream as he made his throw and Heartin screamed aloud as he, holding the toenail tight, went soaring through the air at a great speed. Cursor broke his pose and ran in the direction in which Heartin had been thrown, traversing the grassy plain with giant strides. Heartin reached the peak of his trajectory, high in the purple sky, and began gliding along, passing a few chirping birds along the way. Heartin marveled at his view as the wind wrapped him in a whimsical gust, and for a moment, he could see Wakulla's face, floating, in an oragisail atmospheric projection amongst the clouds. It was a terrifyingly freeing adventurous experience for a minute or so before Heartin and the toenail began their downward trajectory back to the ground.

“Aaaaaaaah!”

Heartin screamed again and stood up on top of the toenail in preparation for impact. Cursor was keeping pace below, nearing the end of the ten mile plain beyond which was The Great Crater, a mile long pit in the Earth’s crust. Heartin came speeding down towards the ground just feet away from crashing into the grassy plains and landed on the sandy wall of The Great Crater. Heartin

rode the toenail like a board down the enormous wall. Cursor reached the end of the plains at top speed and jumped into The Great Crater, landing on his buttocks halfway down its slope and sliding down the rest of the crater wall. Cursor grabbed the flapping extremities of his tan robe and used them to steer himself to a sliding stop at the bottom of the crater. Heartin rode the toenail until it reached the wall's end and leapt from the nail allowing it to slide on for a distance as he landed on his hands and knees at the crater's floor. Heartin and Cursor now stood in between a set of eight white lines, the markings of a racing track, that were drawn into the circumference of the crater.

The Great Crater was created as a park for giants to participate in various tackling sports but over the years was assimilated into a grounds for human mutant training and leisure. A group of seven avercees flew at top speed over the track outlining the crater wall. The avercees all flapped their colorful wings, grown with the genetic influences of various birds and bees, as they raced around The Great Crater. The avercees were all dressed in training uniforms displaying their various organizational affiliations. Leodus, a certified Captain, in a black and green Oglician tracksuit, a man with large black falcon wings on his back, was in the lead. He was black skinned and strong. Leodus soared around the track with ease, gracefully flapping his broad wings, enacting a strategy of flapping vigorously and then tucking them back at his side as he glided. Sophilia, an elderly woman with cream colored skin and wonderful wrinkles on her face, butterfly wings, dressed in a red Flyers jumpsuit, took the pause in Leodus’ flapping as an opportunity to speed past him and take the lead. The pack swooped down low and flew by and around Heartin and Cursor. Sophilia and Leodus sped by followed

by the other avercees. Their colorful wings were all either insectual or feathered, and those wings feverishly pushed the flying creatures around the track. One avercee, with a set of large yellow and black bees wings, came flying and buzzing by Heartin which caused his ears to ring. Heartin covered his ears with his hands as the bee avercee brushed past him in a gust of wind.

“Whoa!”

“Ha! It looks like Sophilia has taken the lead!” Cursor said, adding his commentary to the race. “But we do not have time to await the final result. On we go.” Cursor and Heartin turned towards the middle of the crater which was filled with mutated trees and foliage scattered about which formed clear paths lit by the shimmering plants that encircled a desert plain at its very center. Heartin and Cursor stepped onto a dry sandy pathway that led them into the maze of the mutated garden. Scattered about the garden were glowing crystal quercus that sparkled and glittered with a bright red, blue, yellow and green bioluminescence respectively. Their leaves matched their colored trunks. Heartin could spot a person, high up, on the branch of an enormous yellow quercus, a lounging homolinian woman reading a book. The homolinian woman was large and strong, almost completely naked except for a cloth covering her lap. She had reddish brown hair covering her body and her exposed breasts hung to her sides. She was lying back with her legs crossed, one arm behind her head, and the opposite hand holding the book in the air. She laughed at a witty remark made by a character in the book she was reading. Her rumbling giggle could be heard at the garden floor. Heartin laughed as well unbeknownst to the joke, but the woman's joyous laugh was enough.

Heartin and Cursor continued on amongst a patch of bright shrubs that decorated the grassy ground beside the sandy path. The fruit of the shrubs were fat clear skinned globes with colorful translucent gelatin fruit inside, some of which were pink and the others blue. Heartin picked a blue fruit and took a bite. The juices flowed from his chin.

“Mmm. An enamoring sweet.”

Heartin pulled another blue fruit from a bush and tossed it high to Cursor. Cursor caught it in his mouth and quickly swallowed it whole.

“I agree.”

Sitting on the grassy floor, a few paces away, stood Astrinae, a man with olive skin, grey and white fur covering his lower extremities and arms, with his muscular chest and core exposed, posing with one leg in the air and the other planted firmly on the ground. He was holding the long cut branch of a bamboo tree, a pole of three enures, which he used to help keep his balance. He was wearing a necklace with a gold charm. The charm had an emblem representing his Flyer affiliation etched into it. The necklace swung about as Astrinae, a certified Athlete who taught martial arts, jumped from one foot to the other, supporting himself first with the right and then with the left. Astrinae thrusted the pole into the ground and lifted both legs into the air as he used the pole to support his body. Astrinae stretched his body out flat and posed at an angle perpendicular to the pole.

“Rather impressive,” Heartin commented.

“He’s not done,” Cursor responded.

Astrinae used his powerful core to swing his legs forwards, propelling himself into a swinging spiral around the pole. Around and around he spun, dizzyingly so, before eventually slowing down and coming to a peaceful stop. Astrinae lowered himself to the ground and posed himself again upon one foot. His necklace seemed to gleam like the surrounding fruit of the garden. Heartin and Cursor continued on, passing more glowing quercus and exotic mutated shrubbery of all kinds. Young small homolinians ran through the sandy paths and climbed the trees that lit their happy faces. The children were all mostly human in appearance, but a few of them had brown or black hair covering their hands, face, and feet, and snouts and ears like various bullish creatures. The boys wore brown shorts that were covered in colorful fruit stains and cut off at the knees. The girls mostly wore the same except for their bright floral patterned shirts. They all raced to the top of a tree and then back to the ground again. Heartin and Cursor carefully stepped around the children at play before eventually reaching a more unoccupied section of the garden. There they found a single homolinian, a man with oily black skin and short white hair on his head and legs, and puffy black hair on his head, using the branch of a bright red quercus as a pull-up bar. Up and down, over and over again, the homolinian pulled himself into the air. This man was Zearcher, a man with some squirrel blood pumping through his veins. Heartin and Cursor admired the exercise from afar as they neared the end of the garden.

“It's quite peaceful here at night. Sometimes I still come here to train, occasionally joining the children in a game of ‘tackle the giant’.”

“I’ve been here once before, with my parents, but that was a long time ago.”

Heartin and Cursor, finally, reached the end of the garden paths and stepped onto a stretch of desert land with large cracks in its surface that surrounded the center of The Great Crater. At the very center point of the dry land sat The Kabrin Hall, a massive black box-shaped structure of eighty enures, a spa of sorts with large dining halls. Heartin and Cursor began to traverse the stretch of desert land separating them and the hall. More than twenty paces away stood a hulking hoglercept, a reddish purple man-made creature featuring genetics prominently consisting of pig and triceratop DNA. The hoglercept suddenly startled and charged with a headful of steam in Heartin’s direction. Heartin stiffened and tried to control his breathing when Magnara, a sunburnt woman with flowing blonde hair, dressed in a purple leather halter top, mini-skirt, and matching boots, appeared in the distance riding a dark-green man-made velociraptor like a horse. Magnara was in chase of the hoglercept. The hoglercept quickly made its way past Heartin and Cursor who momentarily paused and looked on at the chase. Magnara soon passed as well and gained on the hoglercept. Magnara stood on the back of her galloping raptor as it ran side by side with the agile creature. Magnara leaped from the back of the raptor and landed on the back of the hoglercept. The hoglercept made a few more strides before Magnara grabbed the animal by the horns and twisted with all her might, turning the neck of the hoglercept which caused it to

fall to one side. Magnara and the hoglercept crashed to the ground. Magnara stood and victoriously pinned the animal to the ground. Magnara smiled as she rubbed the belly of the hoglercept.

“You almost got away that time,” Magnara teased. The hoglercept snorted a giggle and Magnara’s raptor approached her side.

“Magnara, as beautiful as ever. She's the strongest competitor I've ever trained. A reeptilorm like you.”

“You trained her?”

“Really trained with. I used to feed her velociraptor.”

Cursor waved to Magnara in the distance and she waved back. Cursor grinned as he and Heartin continued through the desert, nearing The Kabrin Hall. Surrounding The Kabrin Hall was a moating crystal blue pool constructed of white marble. The walls of the pool came to an end in front of the large black doors that were trimmed with gold. The separation left a clear pathway to the entrance. Heartin and Cursor walked the path and approached the massive doors of thirty-four enures. On both sides of the path the pool featured elevated hot fountains with white marble walls that separated the steaming fountains from the rest of the moat. The waters flowed over the edge of the fountains and into the larger stream of the moat. In the fountain to the left, Shanina, a slim lanky girl with grey translucent jellyfish skin, completely naked except for a grey patch that covered her crotch, with her round grey breasts and nipples exposed, arose from the waters and took a seat on the edge of the pool. Shanina glowed pink and

purple in the evening light. The tentacles on her head were thin and laid back like the pattern of human hair. The tentacles glowed pink and purple with electricity sparkling at their ends. She smiled a smile that illuminated itself in bright purple light and for a moment an electric surge lit her eyes. In the fountain to the right, standing on a small circular black Pollydroop board, stood Vershna, an enchanting woman covered in slick black skin. Her knees, elbows, and breasts were covered in green snake scales and she wore a snakeskin skirt around her large hips. Her eyes were black and slanted like a snake. Her black hair was wrapped in a tight bun. She had gold jewelry on her hands, arms, and ankles. Her split tongue quickly slid out of her mouth and then back in again. Her wiry body was strong and glistening. Of average height she stood amid her demonstration of control, juggling three metal balls that had been covered in kerosene and lit aflame. The black pupils of her eyes lit up in sight of the flames. Vershna used her body's natural vibrating emissions to make the flaming balls float inches above her skin, never allowing the balls to actually come in contact with her body. The balls floated above her palms and feet as she moved her body in a trance inducing dance. Shanina and Vershna are certified Athletes, paid to entertain the visitors of The Kabrin Hall. Vershna’s ball blazed bright and Shanina used her electric body to electrocute and light up the fountain pool making a magical display of the tricks they did as visitors entered The Kabrin Hall. “Hello gentlemen,” Shanina said, “Cursor.” Shanina gave Cursor a nod. “Welcome to The Kabrin Hall,” Vershna said and threw one of the balls she juggled high in the air where it exploded into thin air. Vershna, using a sleight of hand, retrieved another ball and set it aflame using the flame of another, before juggling it with the rest. Heartin and Cursor soon reached the end of the path that led to the black

doors of The Kabrin Hall and the doors opened upon their approach. Cursor and Heartin stepped inside the large welcome hall and the doors shut behind them.

CHAPTER 3

“Gentlemen,” called a voice from the long Pollydroop desk of the welcome hall inside of The Kabrin Hall. “Your party is awaiting your arrival.” Mari, a short brown skinned middle aged man with a bald head and a pot belly, wearing a black suit, shirt, and shoes, headmaster of Kabrin Operations, spoke to Heartin and Cursor from behind a wooden desk that stretched out to a length of two hundred feet long, covering the entire side of the welcome hall to the right of the entrance.

“Stand on the circle,” Cursor instructed as he pointed to a gold circular plate of ten enures that sat on the floor in front of the long desk. Cursor and Heartin stepped onto the plate and Mari pressed a button on the desk which sent the plate sliding down the hall and around the end corner of the desk.

Hall 62, a massive cavernous rocky-walled hall with square-topped cream-colored Pollydroop tables that were attached to the Pollydroop floor below, was being occupied by an anxious crowd of AME constituents that shuffled about the hall. At the western end of the hall was a long Pollydroop bench, forty enures in length, with burgundy cushions. The bench was intended for giant beings. Three chandeliers that were crafted in the likeness of a glowing quercus, hung high from the rocky ceiling and lit the room along with a string of lamps with a similar likeness that were placed around the dining table and the entrance to the dining room. At the eastern end of Hall 62 an elevated platform housed a podium for speeches and behind it was a square cream-colored Pollydroop dining table. Behind the table sat Commissioner

Emblemson, his wife, Rawra, and three other members of The AME Committee.

Upon its creation The AllEarth Corporation created an emblem, the image of a gold outline of the sun. The letters ‘A’, ‘M’, 'E’, ‘A’, and ‘I’, sat on the circumference of the sun in between the sun rays. Commissioner Emblemson, an older dark yellow-gold skinned man with short black hair and a beard that matched, tall and lean in stature, was dressed in a red robe with gold trim. He wore slick black leather shoes and a large shining medallion, with an AME emblem charm, clamped to a gold necklace that swung from his neck. Rawra, a woman with a complexion similar to her husband's, but a little lighter, was dressed in a similar garb, but hers was of a bright green color. She had dark green leather heels on her feet. The other members of the committee, a homolinian Flyer scientist, an event planner, a short Oglician placosis woman, and an Everforce coordinator of human relations, an avercee woman with white wings, were all suited in flight suits, colored to match their respective affiliations, that had patches of merit pinned to the chest. There wasn't a plate on the table. The commissioner had instructed the waiting staff to await Heartin’s arrival. The commissioner, who sat in a seat all the way to the left of the table with his wife and fellow AME Committee members sitting to his right. He looked out over the drifting diners from his seat.

Amongst the crowd were sixteen mutant ambassadors, three team leaders acting as representatives for their respective brands, fourteen coaches, four AllEarth scientists, thirteen corporate investors including two representatives from The Pollydroop Corporation, four AME Committee security guards, and twenty-

five members of the press. The ambassadors all wore flight suits, suits, or dresses, with colors that matched their respective affiliations. The security guards wore red and yellow uniforms with guns on their belts and The AME Committee emblem on their chests while the members of the press and the corporate representatives all wore black and white suits or dresses.

Ambassador Burtonin, a brown skin middle-aged man, with short black hair on his head, a smooth face and the softened body of an ex-athlete, who wore a red suit with Flyers patches pinned to the chest and red leather dress shoes, and Gegsin, a white-skinned AllEarth scientist with glasses and frizzy salt-and-pepper hair on his head that matched his patchy partially shaved facial hair, usually dressed in a white lab coat, which he wore at the time with black leather tennis shoes, stood near the western end of the hall conversing. They both held silver cups filled with bubbling punch. They spoke low as other members of the crowd passed to and fro. Gegsin sipped from his cup and began with his inquiry.

“Burtonin, what if I told you that testing of my hydration solution has transformative implications and could introduce enhanced humans to a great tasting superior form of vitamin consumption which would unlock a new level of efficiency in the digestion system expediting the natural evolutionary process. Would you still be opposed to making Gegsinelixor the topical interest of the ensuing advertisement campaign for this year's tournament? Or do you believe that the public’s pity of an untrained athlete is the more ethical and therefore sensical approach?”

“I'd say the results of your test can only be considered with the possible long term side effects and, even still, the accuracy of the

results are based on the account of uncontrolled variables therefore attaching The AME Tournament and its athletes to an experimental drink would be the clearly more unethical approach, no matter the taste," Burtonin answered stiffly.

"If we're speaking of probabilities, the modifications of my drink were enacted with precision under the watchful eye of certified AllEarth scientists and adhere to all federal regulations while a compulsive animalistic reaction that without being properly identified and diagnosed will likely occur again with disastrous effects meaning your chances of embarrassing the participants and the committee alike are far less likely with the former."

Burtonin drank the rest of his drink. "I'm hungry. When is the boy getting here?" he asked.

Commissioner Emblemson was waiting patiently from his seat behind the podium. Rawra enjoyed a quick witted quib with the committee members to her right before turning to her husband.

"What a travesty? The impertinence and neglect of the prestige of the administration's prosperity driven efforts in the human modification community unaccounted for as the collective consciousness has succumb to a modern obligation to economic fortitude. A telling and encompassing narrative in realization of current interests," she joked.

"I believe that putting the emotional stability of one single athlete at the forefront of tournament narrative is a most honorable investment," answered Commissioner Emblemson.

“Wouldn't the successes and accomplishments of impressive personalities with dedicated followings, like Laslur, be equally as considerable and a more foundationally stable effort considering the aspects of the campaign already in place?”

“Heartin’s re-entry into the race and the public’s sympathetic interests will not have a significant impact on the final outcome of the competition. Attention to lesser known competitors will only strengthen the campaign overall.”

“Are you sure?”

“Sure? Why wouldn't I be sure?”

“What about Wakulla? Laslur has taken a personal liking to her.”

“And of what matter is that?”

“The girl has eyes for Heartin. It is surely an infuriating companionship for Laslur. Wakulla's a most confounding figure for Heartin and Laslur both. It's sure to have some effect.”

“And how would you know this?” Commissioner Emblemson leaned in to his wife as he raised his thin black eyebrows.

“The emotional stability at mention isn't completely dependent on the competitive circumstances in question. Matters of love and war are constantly intertwined. I figured we *must* know, mustn't we. And besides, I could see her following him out of the stadium after the race.”

“Following him where?”

“I don't know, somewhere off into the woods near his little cottage. The situation could be of use in persuading Heartin to cooperate with the proposed strategy.’

“Possibly.”

“You're welcome.”

Commissioner Emblemson kissed his wife on the cheek as Mari, Heartin, and Cursor entered Hall 62.

“Heartin, the commissioner would like a word with you before your introduction,” Mari said informatively.

“My introduction?”

“Yes, while the meeting was impromptu it is still technically a committee meeting and any featured guest is given an introduction. Cursor you can have a seat.”

Mari and Cursor headed to the commissioner’s table. Cursor headed for the giant bench. It was a rather long walk from the open entrance of Hall 62 to the commissioner's table. The crowd of constituents took notice, quietly watching as Heartin approached the commissioner, and many of them took their seats. Commissioner Emblemson stood from his chair as Heartin and Mari reached the table, literally welcoming Heartin with open arms.

“Heartin Kentron, a name that will surely ring throughout these halls for centuries to come. Please have a seat next to me.” An ambassador brought Heartin a folding Pollydroop chair and he sat at the left end of the table. Commissioner Emblemson sat and turned to face Heartin.

“How are you feeling, Heartin? You have unsuspectingly been thrust into the spotlight, intrusively so. I apologize on behalf of The AME Committee.”

“Thank you Commissioner. I feel fine I guess.”

“Great! That is most important. Cursor didn't scare you, did he?”

“Scare me. No. Startled for a moment I'd say.”

Commissioner Emblemson smiled at this response. On the west end of the hall Cursor sat on the giant bench next to Oweclerem, a charming lighter-skinned enhanced human with long brown hair, a beard, and a morphable skeletal structure that changed in size in accordance with his nutritional consumption. He was wearing black sandals and a black rubber suit that expanded as he grew. The more Oweclerem ate the bigger he got and when he failed to hydrate or feed his body shrank almost to the size of an average human. Oweclerem hadn't eaten since lunch and his body was at that time stretched to a length of only twenty enures.

“Good evening Cursor,” Oweclerem said, greeting Cursor as he sat.

“Oweclerem,” Cursor said with a nod, "you're looking exceptionally trim.”

Oweclerem smirked at the remark before responding.

“I fortunately can not say the same for you. You are as stout as a mountain.”

Cursor and Oweclerem engaged in polite conversation while Commissioner Emblemson continued to speak with Heartin over on the east end.

“We would've sent a member of the committee for your retrieval, but Cursor wanted to give you his proposition on his own. Have you considered his offer to join Team Everforce?”

“Considering is an accurate description.”

“Good. The tablet, please.”

Commissioner Emblemson gestured to a nearby ambassador holding a square glass plate tablet of two enures which acted as a viewing screen. The ambassador approached the table with the screen in hand.

“I was able to contact your parents earlier this evening as they arrived at a transmitting station.” Mari wiped his hand across the screen and the image of a holographic recording of Heartin's parents, Wintin, a shorter light-brown middle aged man with black hair, hazel eyes and a receding hairline, along with Surge, a light

pink skinned woman with thick thighs, hips, buttocks, mostly black hair with a purple accent, brown eyes and large breasts that bounced when she spoke, sitting in the pilot chairs of a small three-room spaceship floating its way through deep space, played on the glass tablet's screen. Surge spoke first.

"Hello son. I understand that Team Everforce has made you an offer. You're father and I are in the Statceone quarter of the galaxy, but we're behind you one hundred percent."

"That's right son. An endorsement from that of an established brand like Team Everforce is a prestigious honor. You should be proud. We sure are," Wintin expressed.

"I remember the first time you had a bad headache and went all prehistoric on us. You broke half of the furniture and scratched up our freshly paved Pollydroop floor. I'm glad your temper has finally come to your aid," Surge added.

"We're happy for you and be sure to-"

Before Winton could finish his sentence there was a glitch in the transmission. The image on the screen fluttered and then disappeared from view. Mari interceded.

"Their transmission was interrupted by a meteor shower in the Statceone quarter."

Mari waved a hand and the ambassador holding the screen stepped away from the table before making a quick exit. Commissioner Emblemson leaned closer to Heartin.

“If you're worried about your coach Coach Vonderick approved the transaction and your contract with Team Everforce will be implemented, firstly, on a temporary probationary basis. If things don't work out you can return to Coach Vonderick or pull out of contention completely. I know this is all very sudden, but your incident has captured the hearts and attention of the galaxy and the committee wishes to capitalize.”

“I understand,” Heartin answered.

“Good. Then you will agree to join Team Everforce?”

“I suppose. Yes.”

“Wonderful!”

The Commissioner was visibly pleased and gave Mari a quick nod. Mari approached the Pollydroop podium and addressed the crowd.

“Ladies. Gentlemen. Please, take your seats.”

The remaining standing constituents, including Ambassador Burtonin and Gegsin, sat at the Pollydroop tables.

“Heartin Kentron, the newest edition to Team Everforce, has arrived.”

Mari gestured to Heartin and the sitting audience applauded. Mari continued .

“Commissioner Emblemson has prepared a presentation.”

Mari stood aside. Commissioner Emblemson stood and approached the podium. Commissioner Emblemson cleared his throat before he spoke.

“I would like to begin by thanking you all for your attendance and dedication to the functionality of this committee. Tonight's gathering is for the purpose of discussing the completive discourse of the narrative surrounding this year's AllEarth Mutantologist Evolutionary Athletics and Intelligence Tournament. Our traditional efforts are still at the forefront while the current circumstances have called for a more personable approach.”

Upon this utterance an opening in the Pollydroop platform holding the podium revealed itself and a large glass tablet screen of fifteen enures arose from out of the floor. The screen began to play a holographic recording of yesterday's obstacle race in which Heartin had his compulsory reaction. Heartin stood at the starting line ready to run next to Laslur with a handful of other competitors at their sides. Laslur and Heartin exchanged a quick word and the race began. Heartin ran angrily and at first made great progress through the track of the course. Laslur yelled something else to his fellow competitors and Heartin tried to ignore him, but before reaching the rock wall he transformed and shrieked his awful shriek. The audience of constituents was slightly amused. Heartin made his way up the wall and through the field of nets before swimming through the swimming pool, tarnishing the construction of each obstacle along the way, before ultimately meeting his end

near the finish line. A few members of the audience in Hall 62 giggled at the replay.

“Don't laugh,” Emblemson demanded.

“We are not to make light of this incident. Heartin has worked very hard to prepare for this event and this preliminary race provided him with a chance to qualify for the rest of the tournament. We are partly responsible for his loss and owe him a fair chance at success. There will be one last qualifying obstacle course race and the tournament will begin. So, from now until the start of the race, the vocal focal point of the committee and its partners will be using our scientific innovations to better the health and safety of every competing athlete while raising awareness of genetic complications that could affect them all individually. Heartin Kenton has agreed to be the face of that campaign and will be signing to Team Everforce.”

A holographic image of Heartin wearing a blue and white Team Everforce uniform appeared on the glass tablet screen. The crowd applauded. Mari approached the table with a small glass tablet in hand. The tablet displayed the image of a holographic contract. Heartin hesitated for a moment with the eyes of every occupant of Hall 62 quietly awaiting his endorsement. Heartin raised his hand to the glass and with a squiggly wipe of the screen the contract was signed. Heartin was now a member of Team Everforce. The crowd applauded again. The screen of the glass tablet went blank and retracted back into the floor of the Pollydroop platform.

“All committee members and sponsoring representatives will receive packets containing the details of The AME Tournament’s latest political campaign strategy. The notions are suggestive, except for a few key points on proper nutrition and conduct which leaves room for a certain amount of improvisation. Together we can make this year’s tournament the greatest yet. Thank you all for your attendance. Enjoy your dinner,” said Commissioner Emblemson, bringing his presentation to an end. The constituents of Hall 62 applauded and Commissioner Emblemson took his seat. Mari waved a hand and twenty waiters entered the hall, bringing Pollydroop platters of fruitful gelatin, bowls of stewed mutated herbs, cups of thick red vitamin solution, and Pollydroop utensils to the tables of the various diners. The party members began to partake in their meals and clamoring about. Rawra put her hand on her husband's shoulder and pushed him back in his seat, giving her a clear view to speak to Heartin.

“Heartin, may I ask you a question?”

Heartin chuckled at the thought of a refusal.

“Yes, ask away,” Heartin responded.

“Are you in pursuit of any particular corporate sponsorship or occupational certification as a result of your participation in the tournament?”

Heartin took a moment to think before answering.

“Yes, I’d like to be a Captain.”

“A Captain?”

“Like Elonium.”

“Like Elonium. I see.”

Commissioner Emblemson and Rawra shared a look before Rawra responded.

“I think that's a great idea. I wish you much success.”

“Thank you Miss Commissioner.”

“Rawra. Call me Rawra.”

“I will,” Heartin responded. Rawra sat back in her seat, removing her hand from her husband's shoulder. Commissioner Emblemson looks at Heartin.

“Elonium, you say? You'll have to train very hard and focus on controlling your life energies. That is a tall task but if you remain dedicated, surely, you will be a great Captain.”

“I appreciate the encouragement, Commissioner Emblemson,” Heartin assured. Rawra gave Commissioner Emblemson a nod of approval. The tables were now set.

“Let's eat,” said Commissioner Emblemson, excitedly scooping piles of gelatin onto his plate. Heartin grabbed a bowl of stew and took a sip. “Delicious,” Heartin said after taking a huge gulp. After enjoying the beautifully prepared meal the events of

the committee meeting came to an end. Some of the committee members took their final bites and made their way out of the hall. Cursor stood from his seat at the giant bench and approached the table on the east end of the hall. After arriving at the table, Cursor exchanged pleasantries with Commissioner Emblemson. Mari soon approached the table to escort Cursor and Heartin to the front doors and gave them a proper farewell. Commissioner Emblemson and Rawra gave Heartin and Cursor a wave as the tandem exited Hall 62 with Mari at their side. Heartin and Cursor rode the gold plate back to the Welcome Hall while Mari took the secret passageway. Once inside the welcome hall Cursor and Heartin approached the front door and it opened. Mari gave a final, “Until next time,” and Heartin and Cursor exited through the front doors of The Kabrin Hall.

CHAPTER 4

Fazor and his clan of Oglicians drove through the woods after their recent wooloxicorn expedition. Eneed and Scorer sat in the back of a black dome-shaped tactical truck along with three maroon wooloxicorn that laid near its swinging doors while Tunton and Sorkin sat near the opposite end nodding off. Fazor sat in the passenger seat as Briles drove. The driver's seat and passenger seat were separated from the back of the truck by a black wall with a tinted window. Eneed and Scorer spoke quietly to themselves. “Fun hunt today,” Scorer joked. “Shut your mouth Scorer,” Eneed said, “You cheated.” “That is correct,” Scorer said, “You lost. And that slap from Fazor. Vicious.” “How about you give that a try right now?” Eneed answered. “I'll wait until the next hunt,” Scorer replied. “Right,” Eneed said, “I'll be waiting.” The two of them sat in silence for a moment as the truck shook along up the road away and from the woods. “If I didn't push you, you would've beaten me and I haven't won a wooloxicorn race in months, it seems,” Scorer answered. Eneed thought this over for a moment. “I'll try not to embarrass you then,” Eneed said in response. “And I won't push you,” Scorer said, “As long as I win,” Eneed smiled. Fazor looked at Briles sitting in the driver's seat. “Pick it up a little. Moving slow just like in the hunt,” Fazor said. Briles hit the gas and the truck sped forward to its top speed. The truck rattled up the road and Fazor held on to the dashboard as Briles swerved around. “Okay slow down a little bit,” Fazor said. Briles eased off of the gas pedal and the car slowed down. “Just drive at a regular fast speed and stay in the lines,” Fazor added. Briles smiled to herself. Briles, an orphan, had plans of leaving the Oglician Order and living free. Briles joined the Oglician Order in her youth and planned to compete in the tournament and use

her earnings to escape from the criminal life. She had plans of sneaking off unnoticed and making her way to Africa. She was in the process of convincing Sorkin to join her, but he was hesitant to leave the protection of the Oglician Order who would certainly chase after them if they tried to move on from their alliance to the “O”s. Briles thought of the freedom she would soon achieve. Fazor had nefarious plans for this year's AME Tournament and she would use the opportunity to escape without being noticed. Briles looked out at the road and sky ahead and the truck sped off down the road. The black tactical truck went through Downtown Solareen in pursuit of an Oglician cave on the outskirts of town where the Order members would converge and then disperse to find the comforts of their own homes.

Downtown Solareen was built with the visual aesthetic at the forefront of the designing interest. Most of the buildings were made out of colored Pollydroop. Pollydroop is easily moldable due to its clay consistency, but hardens when exposed to an extremely high temperature similar to the process of glass creation. The final product of Pollydroop shaping is as tough as steel but if heated properly the same Pollydroop structure can be stretched and molded into a different shape which makes Pollydroop an extremely valuable recyclable substance. The buildings were tall shimmering Pollydroop works of art with twisting wavy structures that challenged the limitations of gravity and physics. Near the southern end of Downtown Solareen sat a large building called The Magnet. The Magnet was a large red Pollydroop building that sat on top of a fifty enure grey pillar. The red building on top of the pillar was shaped like the letter U and could detach from the top of the pillar and hover around using powerful jets built into the bottom of the building. The pillar held

an elevator that was used to travel from The Magnet to the Solareen streets below. For the next three days The Magnet would play host to a group of valiant constituents with Captain certifications or investing interests in Captain related affairs. The event was called The Captain's Cruise.

Captains and sponsors arrived at the parking lot adjacent to The Magnet and a valet parked their luxurious sparkling Pollydroop cars. They entered the pillar's grey elevator and once at the top they entered the front lounge of The Magnet. The inside of The Magnet had a lounge with red walls and flooring that connected to four stories of rooms that were built into the walls of the building's U shape. There was a large red Pollydroop desk in the middle of the lounge and a massive red two-sided Pollydroop staircase that led from both sides of the desk to elevators that led to the rest of the rooms. There were game rooms, dining halls, bedrooms, massage parlors, swimming pools, hot tubs, boardrooms, and a dance club with a bar. Popular Captains and rich philanthropists flooded the rooms and enjoyed the activities. There were a total of two thousand constituents in attendance that would be living on The Magnet for the next three days as the building floated through Solareen. The front lounge of The Magnet was filled with mingling cruise-goers when a group entered the room through the elevator. The members of the group were Draper, a dark-skinned placosis woman with some goldfish genetics, seductive in demeanor and appearance rather than speech, who wore a glittering yellow dress covered in gold scales and yellow heels, Hooligan, a short bulky lighter skinned homolinian with the strength of a hippopotamus, wearing a black suit and black leather shoes, Stitcher, a tall white avercee man with large white dove wings on his back, a deep raspy voice, and

a long scar on his right cheek, Doggle, a brown furry man with long flappy dog ears, a man considered part brachet, wearing a red button up shirt and black slacks with red leather boots, Feverlyn, a foxy homolinian woman with tan skin and a long red and white fox tail, dressed in a white tank top and red shorts with furry red boots, Pless, Draper's manager, a shorter black woman with no enhancements, wearing a navy blue pants-suit and matching sandals, two security guards holding luggage, and three sponsors exited. The group made their way to the front desk and were greeted by an attendant.

"Welcome to the Captain's Cruise, ladies and gentlemen," the attendant said as he gestured to the staircases behind him. "You already have your room numbers and digital door codes. You can use the stairs to find your rooms and enter the many lounges with various activities for your personal entertainment. You can use your pocket tablets to view the schedule of cruise activities. You're free to do whatever you like, but your attendance at the sponsorship dinner tomorrow night is required," the attendant explained. "Understood, Draper you're on your own. I'm going to get a massage." Pless went off up the stairs. "I'm going to catch some 'Z's," Draper said to the remainder of the group. "No, forget that," Stitcher said. "Yeah let's get a drink," Feverlyn agreed. "And hit the dance floor so I can unleash the Hooligan," Hooligan chimed in. "I'm down to mingle with singles," Doggle said in favor of having a good time. Draper took a deep breath. She was constantly saving people from drowning in tidal waves and being burned in flaming buildings. She intended to use the Captain's Cruise as a way to relax, but figured some fun could be useful to help her unwind. "I guess I could rest later. Let's do it," Draper said and she, along with Hooligan, Stitcher, Doggle, and Feverlyn,

made their way up one of the red staircases to an elevator and stepped inside. The sponsors went off to their rooms and the security guards took their bags off to be placed in their respective rooms.

Draper and the crew of Captains exited the elevator at the fourth floor of the left side of The Magnet. The fourth floor was a dance club with a large dark blue dance floor, dark blue walls, a circular bar at its center and plush red seating perched along the walls. The bar was made of light-blue Pollydroop and lit up with a bright blue luminescence. Captains and sponsors were dancing about and drinking alcoholic beverages with mutated fruits floating in their glasses. The eccentric collection of partiers danced to the vibrating bass of the loud dance beat pounding through the walls of the club through a frequency transmission that was controlled by a glass tablet screen behind the counter of the bar. There were two-hundred people dancing in beautiful extravagant dresses and suits made of colorful animal furs and skins. Another forty people dressed in equally flashy fits filled the seats and enjoyed their beverages. Draper, Hooligan and Stitcher approached the bar while Doggle and Feverlyn hit the dance floor.

Doggle and Feverlyn pumped their arms and slid across the dance floor. They ended up near a chair where four sponsors sat in conversation. One of the sponsors, a fat man wearing a shiny diamond watch, diamond necklace, and diamond earrings called out to Doggle and Feverlyn. “Hey, I know you guys. You're that dog dude and Feverlyn!” the sponsor screamed over the loud music. “That's us,” Feverlyn answered. “The name is Doggle,” Doggle informed the man. “Right, dog dude, let me buy you guys a drink! I like your style! I can be a big contributor to your brands!”

the sponsor said. “We don't need more sponsors, but thanks,” Doggle responded. “But we'll take the drinks,” Feverlyn added. The sponsor waived over a club worker who brought Doggle and Feverlyn glasses of grapefruit wine. Doggle and Feverlyn took the glasses and quickly started downing the contents. “What if I told you I could offer you one million crispies a piece?” the sponsor continued. Doggle choked on his drink for a moment and cleared his throat. “Maybe we should consider this offer,” Doggle said as he gave Feverlyn an excited look. Feverlyn agreed and they sat down next to the group of sponsors.

Draper, Hooligan, and Stitcher stood around the blue bar holding glasses of passion fruit wine. They clanked their glasses together and swallowed the contents. “Draper, you seem a little uptight. What's wrong?” Hooligan asked. “He’s right. You need to relax. The Solareen Police Department can protect the city for a night,” Stitcher said. “I know. I'm always anticipating a dire emergency or natural disaster,” Draper answered. “Let's make each other a promise,” Hooligan suggested, “The next three days we completely forget about being Captains and protecting the citizens of Solareen.” “Deal,” Stitcher quickly agreed as he gestured to a bartender for another round of drinks, “We’re not allowed to think about saving people for the remainder of the cruise.” The bartender handed them three more glasses of grapefruit wine. Draper hesitated for a moment before she responded. “Deal, we're just regular people while we're here. No saving people,” Draper said. “No saving people!” Stitcher and Hooligan simultaneously repeated. They clanked their glass together and then drank the contents. “Let's dance!” Hooligan said while Stitcher and Draper followed him to the dance floor. Pless laid naked on the table of a massage machine in a parlor room

and enjoyed a spine tingling massage. The massage machine used a number of water jets to apply pressure to various points of the body. All of the invited constituents had arrived and a cruise worker pressed a button on the glass tablet screen behind the desk in the front lounge. The main building of The Magnet detached itself from the grey pillar and began slowly hovering around Solareen.

The night sky was a beautiful dark blue. Heartin and Cursor made their way past the fountain pools and through to the stretch of desert land before taking one of the sandy garden paths. This path was, for the most part, uninhabited except for a few squirrels and rabbits scurrying along. The path led around a string of red glowing crystal quercus that were connected to each other by a set of three rope swings with wooden benches. In the middle seat sat a homolinian man with dark brown skin and long straight silky hair tied into a ponytail which flowed down his back, wearing a black polyester suit with his horse hoof feet exposed, hand in hand with a small brown homolinian woman with puffy black hair, the nose and ears of a hound, and furry paws instead of hands. The hound woman was wearing a tight black dress. The couple swung back and forth as the wind rustled the leaves around. Heartin and Cursor quietly observed the romantic scene before stepping through the remainder of the path. Once out of the garden maze Cursor and Heartin crossed the track of the Great Crater’s floor. Heartin came to a stop at the beginning of the incline of the crater's walls and looked up at the massive climb ahead.

“Well what are you waiting for,” Cursor said tapping his shoulder. Heartin took the hint and leapt up in the air to grab hold

of Cursor’s robe. Heartin used his arms to pull himself up Cursor’s robe one swing at a time. Once he was at the top Heartin swung his leg up and around and landed in a sitting position on Cursor's shoulder.

“Perfect ten!” Cursor praised.

Cursor took large strides up the side of the crater, arriving at the top in a matter of seconds. At the top of the crater, Cursor reached out his hand in front of him. Heartin slid from the giant’s shoulder, down his left arm, and sat in the giant's palm. Cursor twisted his body around and powerfully shot-putt Heartin across the grassy plains once again. This time Heartin didn't scream. He just glided in delight without considering the logistics of his landing. Heartin's gliding trajectory kept him in the air long enough to reach the thick red trees of The Solareen Woods where he came crashing down towards a large oak at the woods edge. Before making impact with the oak Heartin leapt from his toenail glider and landed with both feet on the branch of the oak. Heartin lost his footing upon landing and fell from the branch of the tree. Heartin came tumbling down, grabbing a few branches and losing his grip along the way. After swinging from one low hanging branch near the bottom of the oak Heartin flipped himself into the air and came to a soft landing on the grassy ground. Cursor, who was now breathing heavily, approached the edge of the woods in a full sprint, coming to a sand-whooshing stop in front of Heartin.

“This is where we part. I can't take another branch to the face.” “I have a question, Cursor,” Heartin asked, “The AME Committee could have assigned me to a more popular team. The commissioner mentioned that you insisted on being my coach.

Why?” “Who's your favorite athlete to ever compete in the games?” Cursor asked. “Elonium,” Heartin answered without a moment of hesitation. “Right. Just like almost every other young man with hopes of being a successful Captain,” Cursor responded, “Elonium is a great hero, but his fame was first a product of his participation in the games. Elonium was fortunate enough to win top prize in the games and was rewarded with opportunities that weren't available to The other competitors. I also competed in the AME Tournament the same year Elonium won top prize. I came in second place. The media and the ambassadors of The AME Committee didn't find me particularly captivating to the general public even though I had won enough of the events to earn a Captain certification. That's why I coach. Every winning athlete has to have the heart of a Captain,” Cursor explained. “Do you think you could help me, or is this just a way for you to be a famous Captain?” Heartin asked.

“You would be assigned to some random coach for the Flyers or Oglicians. They have enough advantages. We can help each other,” Cursor responded, “If you stick with me, I'll do everything I can to make sure you receive your Captain certification.” “Then, Cursor, you and I will be champions, together,” Heartin said as they shared a friendly bump of the fist that sent Heartin stumbling backwards a few steps.

“Thank you, Cursor.’

“The honor is all mine, Heartin. We'll practice before your race tomorrow. Try to get some rest. Dream glorious dreams,” Cursor said in finality. Heartin nodded in agreement. “You do the same,” Heartin replied. Cursor nodded before making his way

through the grassy plain at an acute angle from the direction in which they came, heading for the distant cave in which he lived. Heartin watched the giant stride along for a moment and then took one of the many paths that lead through the woods. As he made his way home Heartin took some time to mull over this evening’s events. Heartin hadn't yet grasped the magnitude of his recent agreement conceptually and due to his racing mind hadn't slept any purposeful sleep since running the obstacle race. He reached a point in the path where he got a strange feeling. His mind began filling his current consciousness with thoughts of Wakulla. He was now at the point on the path in which Wakulla found him moping his way home after disqualifying himself from contention.

She suddenly approached Heartin from behind, having followed him from The Combat Stadium. Wakulla had known Heartin since they were school children, years ago, and had been a consistent motivator for Heartin in whatever eccentric predicament he had found himself fortunately or unfortunately exposed to. “Wait,” Wakulla called out with her light airy voice, “Heartin you shouldn't give up so easily.” Heartin turned to her and pleaded to be left alone. Wakulla grabbed Heartin by the hand and assured him that the complications of genetic alterations are the main inconvenience plaguing the mutant community, but after Laslur’s berating Heartin was convinced that the overwhelming majority of the athletes would prefer to run the race again without him. “I want to see you try,” Wakulla insisted. Heartin looked deep into Wakulla's eyes. “I suppose. I could think about it,” Heartin answered. “In that case, whether you compete or not, promise me, you'll attend my race tomorrow,” Wakulla pleaded. Heartin reluctantly agreed to attend and Wakulla gave

him a quick peck on the cheek. The feeling of Wakulla's soft moist pink lips puckered on the skin of his cheek near his chin was a heavenly touch that Heartin seemed to feel all over. Wakulla ran off up the grassy path and Heartin went on his way home. At this moment, Heartin, who was walking and thinking about that very kiss, came to the end of that same path which ended in front of The Dozenth.

Heartin made his way to the concealed elevator door in the Pollydroop pillar of The Dozenth and knocked on the outer wall. The wall of the pillar opened revealing an elevator shaft with a red elevator compartment inside. Heartin stepped into the elevator and rode his way up to the main floor. Once at the top Heartin exited the elevator entered the living room. There was a couch, a dinner table and chairs, a glass tablet viewing screen of three enures and a red furry rug in the center of the floor. Heartin took off his shoes and skipped from the living room past the bathroom door and into his lofty bedroom that was partly concealed from the rest of the home by a large cream Pollydroop wall. Heartin ran for the bed and jumped onto the mattress. He lay back in a breath of relief. He placed his hands behind his head and looked up to the ceiling. Heartin went through the collection of recollectual highlights he had stored in his mind. He once again decided on an image of Wakulla and her image played on his mental ceiling projector. Heartin amorously enjoyed the show until his eyelids became heavy. Heartin closed his eyes and slept the night away.

CHAPTER 5

The Magnet floated high above The Great Crater. Draper, Hooligan, Stitcher, Doggle, and Feverlyn were in a dimly lit blue and white Pollydroop hot tub room that had ten bubbling hot tubs filled with colorful waters. The group of Captains were in a white hot tubs with pink water making foamy bubbles on the water's surface wearing various tribal print swimsuits and swim trunks. There were twenty other cruise goers occupying the other hot tubs and passing each other glasses of fruity wines. One giant woman took up the entirety of one of the hot tubs all on her own. She winked at Doggle who winked back. "What do you think about this year's tournament?" Stitcher asked Draper. "What about it?" Draper asked.

"Any predictions. Any athletes on your radar?"

"Not particularly. Should there be?"

"What about the Reeptilorm kid?" Hooligan asked. "Yeah, everyone is talking about him. What's his name?" Feverlyn asked. "Haterin, or something like that," Doggle responded. "Heartin," Stitcher answered, "He's an interesting character. I can't wait to see how that plays out." "I hope he performs well. The last few tournaments have been a bore. Poor boy," Draper said. "I watched a video of the race and it made my nails hurt," Feverlyn said with a laugh. "He's strong. He ripped apart the rock wall with his hands. I hope he wins a competition," Hooligan said as he flexed one of his powerful arms. "If Laslur doesn't rip his head off," Doggle said, "They've been going at it." "Laslur doesn't want anyone else in his spotlight," Stitcher said in response. "I will let

the stars decide. Maybe Heartin's performance in the tournament has a greater purpose. It seems to be bringing people together," Draper responded as she stood up from her seat in the hot tub. "I'm going to get a massage," she added, "See you guys tomorrow." Draper splashed her friends with a scoop of pink hot tub water and exited the hot tub room. The remaining Captains started a water fight, splashing each other with pink water. Doggle stood from the hot tub and took a seat next to the giant woman. They enjoyed a nasty sexual conversation while the other Captains splashed about.

The city of Solareen was a forest of tall red trees some three-hundred years ago. The thick stitches of plants and stalks were broken up by the introduction of The AllEarth Corporation Building, a large laboratory originally intended for the research of bettering the human experience and strengthening bloodlines. The experiments were comparatively similar to existing institutions already partaking in the regulated use of experimental alternative practices overseen by the already existing officiating western government. The ensuing successful use of technological experimentation leading to the approval of human trials, what could be debatably considered evidence of divine intercedence, resulted in the accidental introduction of the anatomical consistency of a moth to the process of an artificial insemination leading to the birth of a baby boy with wings. The child lived for a number of years but never got to see the full growth of his wings to fly and the unmerciful hands of the irreversible condition took his life before ever reaching the puberic phase. The completion of the delivery was still considered a pivotal anatomical finding which opened the door to retroactively expanding the theory of the fundamental composition of the controversial operation by using a

process of reverse engineering, a strategy of reenacting the circumstances of the accident by examining the video recordings and coexisting analytical documentation of the ordeal.

Several other successful and unsuccessful attempts at recreating and improving the natural theory ensued over the following years before the interest swayed into introducing inanimate objects and living non-thinking organisms into the skeletal and central nervous system leading to birth of a baby girl covered in bark. The modifications implemented in conversion of the formulaic basis of the original occurrence were proven to be the adjustments necessary in order to successfully complete the infusion of a non-human organism and a human’s deoxyribonucleic acids in the womb. The first modification was then improved upon and considered the makings of a new category of human subsequently referred to as "enhanced" humans. The structure of the genetic composition was altered and focused on improving the conditions of humans with life threatening diseases meaning many of the trials were attempted in pursuit of giving people artificially created mutated body parts allowing their bodies to adapt and gradually absorb the biological influences leading to a controlled modified evolution which would result in the creation of stronger faster humans. Thus the first giants, considered to be people of ten enures or larger, were created. Most of these enhanced people were made to look obviously human in physical appearance for the purposes of human decency regarding the outlines of separated political considerations for human beings and animals. The four types of humans with animal DNA intertwined with their human genetics were separated into the four previously mentioned scientific groups, the Placosis, Homolinian, Avercee and Reeptilorm

categories, and the giants were simply referred to as giants. Placosis, homolinians and avercees were easier to make than reeptilorms due to the need of a fossil to create a reeptilorm so there was a much larger number of the first three categories than of the latter. Giants were last in terms of numbers with only a handful of them being created around that time. There was also a few instances in which people received brain enhancements. For instance, some operations allowed for transformations in the way the brain translates information so a human with language enhancements could comprehend and speak every language without being taught. That type of enhanced human could hear a sentence in Spanish and interpret it into Japanese without ever being exposed or accustomed to that method of speech. There were also visual enhancements created to give people the ability to see through vibrating emissions so some people could see with their brains without the use of eyes. Surgeries for broken bones and paralysis found advancement through more common medical practices.

The acceptance of additional more particular enhancements recognizable as the identifying characteristics of non-human beings lead to the first humans with fully functional wings, fur coats and reptilian skins. AllEarth created a logo to represent the company, a gold heart with green and blue outlines of earthly continents and oceans across its surface. Over the century of origin the numbers of enhanced humans grew to the hundreds and a nearby community was created to give these people a centralized societal foundation. The miles surrounding The AME Committee Building and AME Factory were transformed into a housing community with streets, markets, and restaurants. The trend continued with the addition of a hospital, law enforcement

department and an emergency team station. The Solareen Coast Guard was created as a residing section of the larger surrounding North American government. There were conflicting opinions amongst the enhanced human community in regards to furthering the driving intent of some to create a more intertwined chemical composition in formation of a superior more animalistic species with more specialized rights within the existing empowered government in contrast to the opinions of those who believed in retaining the humanality of artificially induced and surgically modified living experiences alike.

The enhanced humans divided themselves into two groups, The Flyers and The Oglicians. The Flyers were in favor of retaining the common opinion of human patriotism using more traditional physical constructions while the Oglicians were in favor of rapid increases in mutant testing with a separatist attitude towards outer society. The Flyers created red uniforms and a matching emblem, an image of a mountain top with wings, while The Oglicians dressed themselves in black and green, identifying themselves with an emblem in the image of a gold rose bulb.

The city of Solareen was sanctioned with a set of liberties that left room for internal political adjustation within the laws of the already established North American government. The Oglicians and The Flyers were in constant debate which led to a number of physical altercations. The fighting escalated until an Oglician was murdered attending a meeting in which the respective advocates were in attendance. This led to a beautiful inclination from Enchantra, a green skinned woman with a large shell, the first creature to successfully survive the complications of mutant genetic alterations. Enchantra suggested the two sides of the

quarrel settle the dispute in a series of games that highlighted the benefits of economic and political interests in furthering research in the genetic enhancement industry which gave birth to their community. The games were athletic competitions and the results dictated the different restrictions which would be the building blocks of the community. The number of people with mutant capabilities that held more passive views on the subjects at hand, an often deciding vote in minor skirmishes, was formed and thus named The Everforce Connection. Everforce chose blue and white as their colors and created an emblem. The emblem was of a silver meteor flaming through space. These three factions of a political society operating inside of a larger overseeing federal government in the middle of the Western Hemisphere formed an official league with a written set of rules for competition called The AllEarth Mutant Enhancement Institution and an official tournament was made with the intention of fair arbitration.

The early games between The Flyers and Oglicians were physically taxing undertakings with politically threatening consequences, but as the years went by and the community settled on more compromising conduct, leaving space for innovation in the industry and ethical moldability, the political impact of the games was diminished and geared more towards financing research and awarding advancements in physical capacity. An award system was implemented into the tournament and The AME Committee created three official occupational certifications for qualifying candidates that operated under the approval of the greater power. The three certifications were Athlete, a professional certification for performers and competitors, an entertainment driven classification, Ambassador, for occupations in enhanced human personal relations, mainly

dealing with AME Committee responsibilities, and Captain, a knight of The AME Committee, with universal jurisdictional authority to involve themselves in particularly dangerous missions and extreme adventurous undertakings if the endeavour is in favor of protecting the Solareenian people and bettering human society. The AME Committee created a list of requirements for certification, a number of tests and community service assignments, however one could be given a certification based on a qualifying deed like a great act of charity or heroism. Qualifying recipients of certifications were given patches to represent their respective certifications. Patches for Athletes were green with a white letter ‘A’ printed on it, the Ambassadors wore a blue ‘S’ on a white patch, and the Captains had a white ‘C’ on a black patch.

The Athletes entertained and encouraged the people with shows of athleticism and coordinated charitable events, the Ambassadors advocated for various policy provisions and represented the ideals of enhanced humans with particular needs while regulating mutant public relations, and The Captains used their exceptional abilities to better the lives of the people, acting as heroes that can be contracted for private missions or volunteer their valiant efforts to the public. The earliest of the Captains to receive a considerable amount of recognition for their contributions to society was Elonium, a strong human with grey skin, sharp teeth and a small fin on the back of his head, the showings of genetic construction combined with that of a shark. Elonium's animal appearance and genius intellect were, to The AME Committee, profitable characteristics that could be used to further integrate mutants into society. The public attention took a toll on Elonium's psyche and he went into hiding, occasionally revealing himself in light of a dire situation.

The AME games were then televised and broadcast to viewers across the galaxy. Thee competitors of the tournament were rewarded with trophies and cash prizes for each event. The competitor with the most competitive victories at the end of the tournament was awarded the top prize. The top prize was five-hundred thousand dollars, a gold trophy, and a number one ranking which the winner held until the completion of the tournament the following year. This improvement in social relations led to an increase in the creation of exceptionally designed humans and over the next century the number of enhanced humans grew to the thousands.

Solareen continued to grow into a thriving self sufficient city and introduced a factory contrived for the production of a new durable non-toxic easily moldable polyethylene clay called Pollydroop. Schools and institutions of higher learning were added to the landscape and a new Solareenian paper currency, the crispie, was introduced. The growth of the city was mimicked in theoretical practice with the creation of farmland meant for growing mutated crops and a number of strange fruits and vegetables were created. The animals of these farms were given various enhancements like sweet smells and coats and furs designed by artists and scientists. Soon the ocean animals were brought into the mix and brightly colored animals were created like pink sharks and yellow whales and so on and so forth. During the next centurial period, the number of enhanced humans on Earth increased to the hundreds of thousands of mutants that exist in current times, the majority of which reside in the city of Solareen.

The city’s sanctions were adjusted by majority votes and disputes over less articulated legal concepts were decided by representative competitors of the AllEarth Mutantologist Evolutionary Athletics and Intelligence Tournament due to the large concentration of enhanced human occupants. Controlling interest in the AllEarth Corporation was divided amongst investing citizens and the tournament was initially operated by the chosen members of The AME Committee which essentially made the committee the governing power of Solareen before that power was later diminished as the laws became more permanent propositions. The AME Committee appointed a Commissioner who would act as the main political figure of the city. Fazor had plans to take over The AME Committee, The AllEarth Corporation, and rise to power over the city. Once he conquered the city, Fazor planned to expand his empire, take over the surrounding North American states, and then use that unified power to take over the entire world. Solareen is an originative point of creation and home to a number of notable social personalities with Elonium being the most celebrated through the short history of the city. The tradition of integrating competitive exploits into the political landscape and the most honorable venture of Captainism lives on through the citizens of Solareen and its many heroes including those aboard The Magnet floating around the city. This history of valiant heroes produced by scientific curiosity was justification for the questionable procedures used during these theoretical explorations. Heartin was in search of this very certification and dreams of its acquisition filled his mind as he slept.

CHAPTER 6

Heartin awoke in his Pollydroop bed, stared at the ceiling for a moment, and then sprang himself up and out of the bed. He undressed himself and nakedly stepped into his bathroom. Heartin showered quickly and brushed his teeth before returning to the bedroom where he dressed himself in a red tribal patterned shirt and matching pants. Heartin headed into the kitchen and microwaved a crumbly breakfast biscuit from his freezer. Heartin took a seat in the living room in front of his glass screen tablet and ate his biscuit.

“Play The Pirates and The Illusive Treasure Hunt,” said Heartin. The screen of the glass tablet lit up displaying the image of a feature film. The film featured two pirates in search of a buried treasure. The pirates got into a fight over the map that designated the buried treasure’s location. The pirates had a tug-of-war over the treasure map and consequently accidentally ripped the map in half. The pirates headed off in different directions with their respective halves of the treasure map, attempting to uncover the treasure on their own by guessing the other half of the missing directions. The pirates had no luck finding the treasure until they ran into each other at a corresponding point on both pieces of the torn map. The pirates had to put the map back together before finally finding the treasure. Heartin enjoyed the adventures of the picture until an image of a red alarm clock popped up on the screen. The alarm indicated that the time for Heartin’s race was in approach. Heartin needed to make his way to The Combat Stadium. Heartin, after walking into the bedroom, dressed his feet in a pair of red socks and bright white Elonium brand sneakers from his closet. They

were the only pair of sneakers he had yet to cut holes into with his long black toenails. He grabbed his black sports bag from its place in the closet and exited the Dozenth through the elevator.

It was early and the sun was still rising. Heartin quickly traversed the woods around his home until reaching the open grassy field of three hundred yards that separated the Solareen Woods from the city. After passing through the field Heartin reached a series of streets housing a fueling station and a market. Beyond the market was a street leading to a large parking lot. At the center of the lot sat The Combat Stadium, a mega sports arena made out of Pollydroop, which stood one hundred and twenty enures high and occupied a mile long block of Solareen. The Combat Stadium held three obstacle course tracks, an aquarium pool covering a distance of two hundred yards with smaller surrounding pool rooms, an elevated obstacle course for flying sports, two rings for combat sports, an open sand field for throwing and projectile sports, a jousting track, and two grass fields for contact sports. Heartin made his way through the surrounding parking lot and towards the arena in pursuit of an entrance for competing athletes. There were large holographic images of advertisements and famous athletes glowing on the arena walls. An enormous image of Elonium, wearing his signature navy blue and black scuba diving suit and navy blue cape, in meditative pose shone and took up the majority of the visible side of the stadium, while a smaller image of Laslur, standing with folded arms, wearing a black Oglician track suit, was displayed in a lower corner. As Heartin approached the stadium, the other half of the wall lit up with another image. This image was a holograph of Heartin posing in a Team Everforce uniform with his arms raised triumphantly in the air. Heartin’s

walking came to a stop feet away from The Combat Arena, and he took a moment to gaze upon the images in awe. A few dozen ticket holders and a couple of athletes were also arriving at the stadium. The athletes were dressed in tracksuits with colors and logos reflecting their particular athletic affiliations. The Flyers in red, The Oglicians in black, and Team Everforce in blue and white. Two ticket holders, an older man and woman, on the way to a ticket-holder's entrance, took notice of the image and Heartin standing before it.

“That's you,” the old man said as he pointed at Heartin.

“Oh yeah, he’s the boy. I saw him on the news yesterday night. Hun, get a picture,” the woman begged. The man pulled a small glass tablet from his pocket and the woman stood next to Heartin. The man took a picture and the woman squeezed Heartin in a big hug.

“You will do outstanding, I'd bet my entire savings!”

“Thanks,” Heartin said in response and gave the couple a wave before they went their separate ways. Heartin entered The Combat Stadium, passing a couple of security guards who recognized him upon his arrival. The security guards gave Heartin an approving nod and one of the guards shouted to him as he passed.

“Go get ‘em, young fella!”

“Yeah, give 'em hell, Heartin! You got this,” the other guard added. Heartin nodded back, keeping his composure. Heartin

wasn't used to this type of attention. Just yesterday, Heartin walked this same path into the stadium completely unnoticed. Heartin entered the stadium and walked down a large walkway leading to the locker rooms. The women's locker room was on the left and the men's locker room was on the right. Heartin entered the men's locker room, where there were a couple of mingling athletes wondering about, and found a large bench to lay his bag. Inside the women's locker room, Wakulla, who wore a red and white Flyers tracksuit, prepared herself for her own race. Wakulla stood in between a set of lockers and took off her jumpsuit revealing a red swimsuit underneath. Wakulla would swim for The Flyers in the Treasure Hunt Race. She placed her jumpsuit in her bag and zipped it shut. Heartin pulled a grey jumpsuit out of his bag and took off his clothes with only his boxer briefs remaining. Heartin put on a grey jumpsuit and stuffed his tribal shirt and jeans into his bag before putting his Elonium sneakers back on. Heartin exited the men's locker as Wakulla made her exit from the women's locker room. The two of them immediately locked eyes, coming to a stop just feet away from embracing reach of the other.

“Heartin.”

“Wakulla.”

There she was. Heartin’s heart skipped a beat and the heat of love burned the back of his neck. She was a gorgeous vision of physical excellence in Heartin’s mind and she had the brains to match. Heartin tried to suppress his oragisail thoughts, but an occasional glance downward at her lusty figure was a source of arousal. She had always been a good friend to him and he never

wanted to compromise their friendship with sudden advances, but the second pair of hands he had in his imagination were slowly squeezing her tight in an exhilarating embrace. Wakulla's swimsuit hugged her body tight and Heartin could see every perfect curve occupying the suit. Her strong legs and thighs, her beautiful bum, her soft beasts and skin, her neatly covered but eye-catching lower female parts, and most of all her earthy eyes were almost dizzying for a moment. Wakulla moved half a step forward as if she wanted to give Heartin a hug, but she changed her mind.

"I'm glad you changed your mind," Wakulla said. "Thank you. I spent the night thinking about what you said," Heartin responded. He hesitated for a moment before he stepped forward, swung his bag to his side, and reached for Wakulla. Wakulla, who was an eighth of an enure taller than Heartin in his usual form, reached down and around as the two shared a long hug coming chest to chest. Heartin could feel Wakulla's soft skin, physical warmth, and pointed breast against his body and his breathing increased. The nails of his fingers began to extend and Heartin pulled away.

"Are you going to have time to attend my race? I can understand if you have more important obligations at this point, being a famous competitor now and all," Wakulla said in inquiry of Heartin's intentions post obstacle race.

"That's the plan. I haven't been obligated otherwise."

"Then I'll see you there. In the crowd presumably."

"Surely. I'll see you from the crowd."

And with that the two separated and went down the hall in desperate directions. Heartin arrived at a swinging door with a designating Team Everforce logo on the door. Heartin pushed the door open and stepped into the training room. The room was twenty-five yards long and wide and was filled with weight training equipment lining the walls. The center of the room was covered in a green artificial turf and provided space for stretching and team practice. Two other Team Everforce athletes, in team tracksuits, a young avercee man, Inast, and a homolinian woman, Pina, and Cursor stood in the middle of the turf and welcomed Heartin inside.

“Heartin, right on time. Come quick. Let's practice before your race,” Cursor said. Cursor led Heartin to a Pollydroop exercise machine meant for hoisting oneself up in the air as a core exercise. There were three yard-long rubber bands laying on the floor near the machine.

“You’ve been using a strategy of suppressing your body's compulsory reaction when you're racing to avoid losing cognitive control of your functionality and entering an instinctually aggressive mental state. Here, take off your shoes and step onto the machine,” Cursor said, curiously gesturing with one hand to the machine. Heartin, took of his shoes, set them on the floor, stepped onto the exercise machine, and faced Cursor who yelled to Inast looking on from one side of the room. “Inast, can you help me out?” Cursor asked. Inast, a young man with a light complexion and a buzz cut, approached the machine, grabbed the rubber bands and wrapped them tightly around Heartin. Heartin exhaled as the bands squeezed him tight. Inast tied the

bands in a knot behind the machine and gave Cursor a wink before returning to the other side of the room where he began stretching in preparation for his participation in The Air Obstacle Race.

“Now let's begin,” said Cursor, “I want you to breathe slowly and relax.” Heartin breathed in and before he could breathe out…

“Roar!”

Pina jumped from her hiding place behind a neighboring machine. Pina was a slim built homolinian woman with brown skin, flowing black hair, and a set of vicious fangs that she showed as she screamed. Heartin’s body undertook immediate transformative action and Heartin shrieked an awful shriek. Heartin breathed a puff of hazy mist and his eyes dilated to a blackened state. He then instinctively attempted to break himself free. He put all of his might into breaking free from his constraints. He gathered himself and took three steps away from the machine, stretching the bands to their furthest ability, until the tension was too much to stand. The bands pulled Heartin back to the machine and his back slammed against the machine’s cushion. Heartin was a little shaken up which only infuriated him. He jostled about trying to set himself free.

“Heartin. You need to relax. Breathe. Focus,” said Cursor as he took a few deep breaths of his own. Heartin ceased his struggle.

“You must use your mind to control your natural capabilities. If you stay calm you'll free yourself,” Cursor insisted. “Look at me,”

he demanded. Cursor bent down low on one knee to look Heartin in the eye. Heartin focused on Cursor while he attempted to control his rage. Heartin started to relax and his body returned to its usual form.

“No!” Cursor yelled and Heartin’s adrenergic bodily reaction re-implemented itself.

“This reaction is your body's attempt to reach its most powerful form. Your suppression of the reaction is indeed the internal obstacle withholding your progression,” Cursor explained before adding another instruction.

“Keep your form. Accept the feeling it brings. You will free yourself.”

Heartin followed Cursor's directions, but at the time was unable to articulate a response. Heartin closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths while maintaining his more reeptilormian form and suddenly he had a moment of inspiration. Heartin used his long finger nails which were now extended to their fullest length to poke holes in the rubber bands before reaching out and snapping the bands completely, triumphantly freeing himself before stepping down from the machine. Heartin walked around for a moment. Cursor, still down on one knee, reached into a pocket of his robe and pulled out a live bunny rabbit. Cursor held the bunny by the ears out in front of him. Heartin salivated and lunged for the bunny. Cursor quickly pulled the rabbit away.

“Not for lunch. This one is a pet,” Cursor said as he put the bunny on the ground and the animal ran off exiting the training

room. “Focus on maintaining your form and use that killer instinct when you run,” said Cursor.

“Now give me a few laps,” Cursor barked. Heartin began jogging around the circumference of the turf, tripping on his toenails along the way. Cursor yelled a few criticisms.

“Run on the balls of your feet. Adjust your ankles. The bones of your feet are likely uniquely structured for running with your toenails extended.”

Heartin followed the bit of guidance and pounded the balls of his feet into the ground as he ran, gradually accelerating at an impressive speed.

“Good. Very good,” said Cursor with a partly satisfied look on his face. Heartin ran with vigor until his mind began to relax. The dilatation of his eyes reversed their effect, returning Heartin's pupils to their original round brown appearance. Heartin’s running slowed in pace.

“That’s enough. Take a break and prepare for your obstacle race,” Cursor cued and stood. Heartin slowed to a stop and approached Cursor as his nails and exoskeleton retracted to their hiding place underneath Heartin's skin. Heartin put his hands on his knees and took a few collecting breaths.

“You'll need to work on your stamina. Your body is exerting too much energy in its transformative stages. We’ll try again later,” Cursor said as he pulled a bundle of clothes out his other pocket. Cursor reached low and handed Heartin a blue and white Team

Everforce track uniform. ‘Copy that, coach,” Heartin said in a temporary farewell as he took the uniform from Cursor’s palm and grabbed his tennis shoes. Heartin waved a good-bye to Inast and Pina before exiting the training room through the swinging door. Heartin found his way back to the men's locker room and changed into his new uniform. He put his shoes back on, pulled a chocolate candy bar from his bag, and gobbled it down, before stretching for a moment and exiting the locker room. Heartin made his way down a number of hallways that led to the competitor’s entrance of The Grass Field Auditorium that held the Obstacle Course Track. Once inside, a few members of the screaming crowd noticed Heartin’s arrival and pointed excited fingers at him. Heartin headed for the starting line, passing Laslur, and the other competitors, all wearing team tracksuits, along the way. There were eight people in the race. There were three Homolinians, three Placosis, including Laslur, one Avercee, not allowed to use his wings during the competition, and Heartin, the sole Reeptilorm. Three of the competitors were representing The Flyers, two of them were representing The Oglician Order, two from Team Everforce and there was one independent avercee. Laslur took his place at the starting line next to Heartin and gave Heartin an angry look.

“I'm against letting real animals in the race,” Laslur said loud enough for Heartin to hear. Laslur was tall and strong with a dark tan complexion and had oily black hair that was slicked backwards. Laslur’s DNA was infused with that of a leech and a leopard, a rare combination. A few of the competitors laughed at Laslur's comment. The obstacle race was very competitive. In the crowd there was a viewing section reserved for AME officials and special guests. There sat Rawra and Professor, an attractive light

brown skin woman of average height and weight, with black hair that flowed down her back, the president of the Pollydroop Corporation. Commissioner Emblemson felt his attendance wasn't imperative. Heartin stood at the starting line next to Laslur and avoided making eye contact with him. In his head Heartin thought of things he could say to Laslur. ‘Why are you in the race, you treacherous beast?’ Heartin thought to himself. He settled on a more respectable response. “Then quit. Or lose to a dinosaur,” Heartin said to Laslur. Laslur quickly responded, yelling over the screaming crowd. “What did you say? I don't speak Reeper,” Laslur answered. Heartin started to grow angry and he began to transform. It was easier to transform into his reeptilorm form again after doing it once, but the effect wasn't any easier to control. Heartin’s toenails poked their way out through the front of his Elonium sneakers. Laslur squinted his eyes, disgusted with the appearance of Heartin’s reeptilorm form and the two of them faced the starting line of the Obstacle Race Track.

The officiating crew, dressed in grey and black form fitting uniforms, took their positions on the track and the racers readied themselves for the start of the race. An official signaled the start of the race and the sound of a whistle blew through the speaker system. The competitors took off, racing their way up the flat stretch of the track in front of them. Next, there lay the rock wall, a series of net obstacles, a shallow pool and lastly the crucial half mile of running track leading to the finish line. The competitors hurried through the obstacles and Laslur found his way near the front of the pack while Heartin fell behind until they reached the rock wall where Heartin made some progress. He was a great leaper and jumped from the ground onto the halfway point of the rock wall before grabbing the wall and swinging himself up the

last half, passing one of the competitors in the process. Once on top of the wall, Heartin jumped from the thirty enure peak and rolled upon landing on the ground in contrast to the other competitors who quickly climbed their way down. He passed two more competitors in the jump. The net obstacles, a number of ropes attached to neighboring poles, gave Heartin some trouble as he tripped over the ropes and found himself strung up at times. This frustrated him greatly while other competitors fluidly leapt from rope to rope. Laslur passed through the net obstacle with ease and took a moment to look back at Heartin.

“Stuck like a rat in a trap,” Laslur said as he ran along, “Animals not allowed!”

And with that last word, Laslur sped up the grassy track to the pool of the swimming obstacle. After clearing the net obstacle, Heartin was in the lead of only two competitors. This angered him and he blew a smoky mist from his mouth and into the wind as he ran. He remembered to adjust the position of his ankles as Cursor instructed and his speed accelerated. Heartin ran full speed and leapt high in the air, landing in the pool as Laslur reached the halfway point. Heartin made a big splash as he dropped into the pool. The crowd was audibly amused which temporarily distracted some of the swimmers. Heartin sped along swimming with all his might and by the time he exited the pool he was in third place behind only Laslur and a homolinian competitor. Laslur looked back at Heartin as he ran, throwing an insult along the way.

“Give it up Reeper-face!”

Heartin remained just calm enough to stay focused on the race and passed Laslur on the track. The crowd cheered and every ticket holder in attendance was on their feet, including Rawra and Professor Craddleson who excitedly looked on from their place in the stands. Heartin became more excited as he ran and it had a negative effect on his sprint. He could feel himself losing control of his reeptilorm form. Heartin thought of Laslur's insult and the ensuing fury kept him going but he continued to slow in stride before he could catch up to the homolinian in front of him. Laslur, a highly trained and enduring athlete, heightened his pace for the last part of the final stretch. The homolinian crossed the finish line and Laslur passed Heartin just a few strides from completing the course, coming in second place, while Heartin finished third. The other competitors soon came across the finish line and the crowd cheered as the exhilarating race came to an end. Heartin came to a stop and took a moment to catch his breath as the competitors congratulated each other. Laslur shook a few of the competitors' hands, but failed to approach Heartin. Laslur's undiminishable competitive spirit and his infatuation with Wakulla fueled his hatred for Heartin.

Cursor had watched the race from a glass screen tablet in the Coaches Room, reserved for the coaching staff, a blue walled office, with four tables and a refrigerator, attached to The Team Everforce Training Room. He gave a cheer for the excellent performance. Wakulla, after having had a few warm up laps, sat on the edge of the pool in a small room with a hall connecting it to the Aquarium Pool Auditorium. Wakulla had watched The Obstacle Race on a small pocket sized glass tablet. Wakulla smiled at Heartin's successful completion of the race while drying her hair with a towel she held in one hand. Heartin waved at the

cheering crowd and exited the track. Wakulla placed her glass tablet in her bag and closed it shut before standing and entering The Aquarium Pool Auditorium.

CHAPTER 7

The Aquarium Pool Auditorium held seating for one-hundred thousand people which surrounded a six-million gallon salt water aquarium pool. The contents of the pool could be seen through its thick clear Pollydroop walls. There was seaweed floating throughout the salt water and a broken ship near the bottom center. Wakulla set down her bag near a group of white beach chairs reserved for the racers. The event was a treasure hunt race. The object of the race was to be the first to come in contact with the treasure chest at the bottom of the pool.

Wakulla made her way to the pool's edge alongside twenty other competitors all wearing swimsuits with colors and imagery reflecting their respective affiliations. The officiating crew of six referees dressed in grey and black took their places around the pool. The officials waved a hand and simultaneously jumped into the pool. A loud whistle blew and the competitors jumped into the pool. Wakulla, a placosis, with slick shiny blue and silver scales on her hands, gills over her lungs, and webbed toes on her feet, was clearly extremely comfortable in the water. She flowed eloquently through the water at a steady pace before reaching the obstacles of the course. The floating strands of seaweed throughout the aquarium pool made the broken ship at the bottom barely visible to the audience that excitedly watched from the stands.

Wakulla shifted her body from side to side around the leaves of seaweed like a ballerina tip-toeing across a dance floor, passing a number of competitors who struggled their way through. The officials swam around keeping close watch on each of the

competitors. Closer to the broken ship at the center of the aquarium pool were thicker bundles of seaweed completely covering the ship’s open wall that served as an entrance which led to the treasure. Wakulla sped for the entrance alongside one other competitor who was in the lead. The two swimmers disappeared into the seaweed and swam through the entrance of the ship.

The audience couldn't see inside the ship from the aquarium walls. They looked up to a glass tablet screen, of forty enures, hanging above the pool. Inside the ship, Wakulla and her opponent swam towards a small gold colored treasure chest that glowed in the dark blue salt water. Wakulla and the adjacent swimmer jostled for position and used their arms to reach out for the chest. Wakulla closed her eyes during the last moment of her push for the treasure and opened them again when she felt her hand come in contact with the chest. Her opponent had also touched the chest in the same second. Wakulla and her opponent looked for a signal from the swimming official. The official lifted a hand towards Wakulla's competition and signaled a victory. Wakulla had come in second place. The winner grabbed the treasure chest and exited the ship through the opening in the ship wall. Wakulla, visibly upset, punched the wall of the ship as she swam her way through the entrance and up out of the pool. The winner was awarded one-hundred thousand crispies and the competitors shared kind words before parting ways and returning to their respective locker rooms. Wakulla looked around in the crowd for Heartin, but he was nowhere to be found. She waited and looked around for a moment before exiting The Aquarium Pool Auditorium. Wakulla made her way down the hallway that led

to the locker rooms. She walked the hall quickly as her emotions seemed to rush through her entire body.

“Wakulla!”

Heartin called out from the opposite end of the otherwise empty hallway before running to meet Wakulla by the doors of the locker room. Heartin made inquiry of the results of the race.

“What happened?”

“You didn't see?”

“I couldn't, but listen to this. I actually finished the entire obstacle course,” Heartin said excitedly. “Good for you,” she said in reply. Heartin recognized her discomfort. “I would've watched your race, but after winning I was approached by Professor Craddleson of The Pollydroop Corporation. She asked about my interest in potential partnership opportunities with Pollydroop upon my completion of the tournament.” “That's great,” Wakulla replied, “You should consider.” Heartin bowed his head in thanks. “How'd you do? Tell me,” Heartin asked. Wakulla, sulking, answered. “Well, all things considered, okay I guess. I came in second.” “Second is good,” Heartin agreed. “I'm hungry. Let's grab a bite,” Wakulla said. “I can't at the moment,” Heartin answered, “Professor Craddleson wants to give me a quick tour of the Pollydroop Factory and she leaves town tonight.” “Good. That's great. You should call me when you're finished,” Wakulla proposed.

“Yeah, of course, once I'm at home.”

“Heartin, you really need to get a pocket tablet.”

“I could, but I like speaking to people in person.”

“I know.”

“If I do well in the tournament I might invest in one and maybe a Pollydroop Vroomer,” Heartin answered half jokingly. The Pollydroop Vroomer was a vehicle with a Pollydroop outer body. The seat of the car sat on one rotating ball that served as the wheel.

“Well, if you win, remember to give me a lift if you have time,” Wakulla answered. “I'm going to speak with my coach,” she added before the two of them shared a nod and Wakulla went off down the hall towards The Flyer’s Training Room. Heartin went down the hall in the direction in which he came. Cursor met Heartin in the hall. “Heartin, that was phenomenal. Great job, my boy,” Cursor said.

“Thanks Cursor,” Heartin replied.

“I'd give you a pat on the back, but hopefully a good word will do.”

“That's more than enough. I don't want you to strain yourself.”

Heartin and Cursor shared a laugh.

“And what's with the girl? Wakulla is it? She's a nifty competitor.”

Cursor had taken notice of Heartin and Wakulla’s exchange at the end of the hall.

“What about her? We're good friends,” Heartin answered simply.

“Ah! You're part raptor, but you're a dog. Good on ya,” Cursor said with a snicker.

“I'm exhausted. I'm going to rest a moment before leaving for my tour of the Pollydroop Factory,” Heartin said as he stretched his arms out.

“Very well. Practice will continue tomorrow. You're competing in the jousts, correct?”

“I am. I'll be here bright and early.”

“And so will I.”

And with that Cursor went off, making his way to the fighting rings to watch the mud wrestling competitions in which Magnara would be one of the competitors. Heartin went to the men's locker room where he threw his bag on the floor. Heartin laid on a locker room bench, with his feet on the bench and his hands behind his head, and closed his eyes.

Wakulla stepped into the coach’s viewing room inside of The Flyer's Training Room. Once inside she was greeted and embraced by Coach Nokaridge, a tall woman by human standards with short antlers protruding from her temples. Coach

Nokaridge consoled Wakulla with kind words and a pat on the shoulder.

“You did well. It's just the first round. Tomorrow we'll show the world your true versatility in the obstacle course race. Take your thoughts elsewhere until then. Enjoy tonight's festivities,” Coach Nokaridge firmly stated. Wakulla agreed and the two shared a final embrace before Wakulla exited the viewing room. Wakulla quickly put on a red Flyers jumpsuit and a pair of blue tennis shoes in the training room and made her way to the stands of Grass Field Auditorium B. Wakulla took a seat in the third row completely unaware of the fact that The Combat Stadium was about to be attacked.

Heartin fell asleep laying on the bench in the men's locker room of The Combat Arena. His mind was racing while his body was at rest and the next moments occurred speedily, recallable to Heartin only as a blur of instances. It seemed as if he opened his eyes to the beautiful view of The Great Southern Canyon. Heartin was in a cream colored Pollydroop helicopter sitting next to Professor Craddleson. The two of them sat in the back seats of the helicopter while a pilot steered the vehicle over the large colorful canyon with red, blue, yellow, and green rocky walls that glittered in the evening sun. They were in pursuit of the Pollydroop Factory, a large factory made out of Pollydroop, lined with gold on its doors and pillars. The helicopter reached the factory and landed on top of it. Heartin, Professor Craddleson, and the pilot exited the vehicle and entered the Pollydroop Factory through a door on top of the building.

Wakulla was simultaneously enjoying the celebratory festivities of The AME Competition. The grassy field played host to a parade of enhanced humans. A marching band of one-hundred and two musicians with horns and drums, accompanied by a team of dancers, rounded the field which was lit up by a colossal display of fireworks exploding from projectiles set on a stage at the center of the field. Thirty avercees flew around in coordinated patterns, flapping their wings to the rhythm of the band's beat. Wakulla watched from the stands and waved down a concession worker for a stick of cotton candy. The concession worker handed Wakulla a stick of pink cotton candy shaped like a blowfish. Wakulla pulled out her pocket tablet and pressed her finger onto the screen, completing her payment for the sweet treat. The concession worker continued off into the stands and Wakulla made a call on her pocket tablet. Her mother, Marrinian, a woman in incredible shape, the same height as Wakulla, with light pink skin and brown hair, answered.

"Hey Guppy," Marrinian called Wakulla by her childhood nickname. "How'd it go?" Marrinian asked. "Abysmal. I came in second," Wakulla replied.

"Second is more than exceptional. You should be proud."

"I am. And I'd be more proud if I won the race."

"Don't get your gills in a grind, Guppy," Marinnian insisted. "If you're not having fun you needn't be there at all. You can always come back to the club. Enjoy yourself darling." Wakulla agreed and ended the call before taking a big bite out of her cotton candy.

At the Pollydroop Factory Professor Craddleson led Heartin on a tour of the laboratory where they worked in constant pursuit of perfection regarding the secret Pollydroop formula. Professor Craddleson gestured to a number of large tablet screens displaying holographic images of genetic schematics and theoretical equations. “This laboratory is right at the heart of the factory where we work towards revolutionizing energy consumption and preserving natural resources by perfecting the formula of our non-toxic durable building substance. Heartin, your story is a perfect example of calling attention to society’s deficiencies and capitalizing off of its correction,” Professor Craddleson explained. Heartin, wide eyed, gazed at the technologies of the laboratory.

On the production floor of the Pollydroop Factory a large vat of bubbling Pollydroop overflowed and began to spill on the floor. The sticky substance slid down the walls of the vat. A factory worker in a blue jumpsuit approached the vat and ran to a button box that controlled the temperature of the vat. The worker pressed a few buttons, but it had no effect. The contents of the vat continued to spill. The worker took off his cap in frustration and pressed his finger onto a glass tablet screen next to the button box to call for help.

“Damage Control? I have a vat that’s,” Before the factory worker could finish his statement the menacing figure of a goopy creature with four legs and a body seven enures long, covered in Pollydroop, arose from the vat. The monstrous creature slid out of the vat to the ground below and growled a vicious growl slightly muffled by its Pollydroop covering. The factory worker sounded an alarm and made a quick exit.

Heartin and Professor Craddleson could hear the alarm in the laboratory and a warning flashed on the laboratory's glass tablet screens. ‘Intrusion Alert. Monster.’ These words flashed in bright red on the screen. The laboratory underwent its automatic reaction of locking down the laboratory, protectively trapping Heartin and Professor Craddleson inside behind the glass walls of the laboratory doors. The Pollydroop monster roamed the halls and found its way outside the laboratory. The creature beat on the glass walls of the laboratory attempting to make its way inside. Professor Craddleson let out a nervous scream. Heartin breathed a gust of smoky mist and his body transformed.

A security guard, a strong black man wearing a cream colored uniform, stepped into the hallway outside of the laboratory and met the monster face to face. The Pollydroop covered creature lunged for the security guard as the guard shot it with a stinger gun. The shot had no effect and the creature tackled the security guard to the ground. The guard struggled with the beast as Pollydroop dripped from the monster onto the face of the guard. Heartin’s mind was overexcited and he instinctually sprang into action. Heartin used his nails to scratch, cut, and then break the glass of the laboratory wall. Heartin stepped into the hallway. The Pollydroop monster turned his attention to Heartin. The creature rushed at Heartin who athletically avoided the monster. Before the Pollydroop monster could attack again Professor Craddleson sprayed it with Freezalyne using a can shaped like a fire extinguisher. Freezalyne was a man-made element with freezing properties. The substance surrounded the monster in a chemical smoke. The Pollydroop that was covering the monster hardened and the movements of the monster came to a stop.

Heartin, Professor Craddleson, and the security guard breathed a collective sigh of relief. “Thanks kid. Good job,” the security guard said as he shook Heartin’s hand.

The celebration at The Combat Stadium continued while trouble manifested itself on the nearby beach which lay a quarter of a mile away from the parking lot. The beach goers enjoyed the rays of evening sunshine lighting up the beach. Children ran from beach umbrella to beach umbrella, interacting with the family atmosphere. One child swam alone along the shore. The child felt something strange touch the bottom of his foot and ceased to swim before looking around for the sight of another child. The child held his breath and dipped his head under the water. When the child arose again it was accompanied by the appearance of a giant head that belonged to a green beast, with webbed hands and feet and a fishy face, that stood at a height of thirty enures. The child screamed in sight of the monster and swam to escape. The spirit of wild evil breathed through the large nostrils of the uncommonly sized mutant being that had been morphed by a chemical waste that sunk into the ocean from a corporate ship. The beast attempted to grab the child, but missed. The swinging arm of the beast created a tidal wave which flooded a portion of the beach. The beach goers took notice of the wave and spotted the giant sea beast as it walked out of the water and onto the sandy shore! The beach goers screamed in terror and vacated the beach! Men, women, and children tripped over chairs and beach towels as emergency responders were contacted. Solareen City life-guards exited the beach while helping stragglers escape in proper response to an attack from an unidentified threat. The beast walked from the beach and through

the parking lot of The Combat Stadium, crushing a few cars along the way.

Wakulla was just finishing her cotton candy stick when a commotion interrupted the celebration. A warning on the large glass tablet hanging over the middle of the field called for immediate evacuation due to a life-threatening intrusion. The crowd members panicked and rushed for the exits. Wakulla, with her bag over her shoulder, ran into the hallway which led from the grass field and passed the aquarium pool before reaching an exit. When Wakulla stepped into the hallway she could see Rawra and a group of security guards rushing for the nearest exit. Wakulla ran to exit the stadium through the same door.

As Wakulla and hundreds of ticket holders ran for the exit a large flood of water filled the halls. A child who was running in front of her got caught in the rush of water and was pushed in Wakulla’s direction. Wakulla stood tall and caught the child in her arms. The waters overtook them and Wakulla began swimming up the hall. After a moment the flooding subsided. Wakulla and the child fell to the floor. After collecting themselves for a second the child and Wakulla stood up and ran for the exit. “Where are your parents?” Wakulla asked. “I don't know,” the boy answered. They continued down the hall soaking wet when the giant sea beast stepped out of The Aquarium Pool Auditorium and into the hallway blocking Wakulla, the child, and the other crowd members from the exit. The beast had broken the glass wall of the aquarium and was now in search of more destruction. The beast stepped toward the crowd and the frightened people backed away from the beast, heading in the opposite direction away from the exit.

The beast roared and sped up its pursuit. Wakulla grabbed the child again and maneuvered past the sea beast by sliding under its legs. Cursor stepped from out of The Mud Field Auditorium into the hallway and locked in on the beast. Cursor ran up to the beast and grabbed its torso, getting into a life-or-death wrestling match with the strong sea creature that snapped its powerful jaws which Cursor carefully avoided while pulling at its limbs. Cursor found a way to grab the animal from behind as Leodus flew onto the scene. Leodus charged the sea beast as Cursor held on tight and Leodus head-butt the struggling monstrous menace with his beak, knocking the beast unconscious. Cursor let go of his grip of the beast and the sea beast fell to the ground. The on-looking crowd, including Wakulla, who set down the child in her arms, Rawra, and the security guards, who all stopped running at sight of the beast, applauded the heroics. “Do you think you can find your parents?” Wakulla asked. The child pointed. “There they are!” The child ran into his parents arms warming the hearts of Rawra, the security guards, and relieved ticket holders alike.

Evening turned into night as The Magnet floated over The Solareen Sea and the water reflected the bright red moon in the sky. Feverlyn and Doggle stood at a window in an observation room on the west side of the building. The observation room was a deck with a clear glass wall through which the beautiful ocean below and the dark night sky could be seen in passing. Feverlyn, who wore a beautiful red gown and matching heels, and Doggle, who wore a tangerine-colored suit with a white shirt and white leather shoes, looked out the window as they awaited the start of that evening's sponsorship dinner. Draper approached wearing a flowing white dress that fell to a stop right amongst her strong

thigh. She was wearing white heels and a white band in her hair. “See any dolphins?” Draper asked. “Not yet, just beautiful waves,” Feverlyn answered. “I could go for another swim after dinner,” Doggle said in response. “So could I,” Draper agreed, “I'm finally starting to relax.” Pless entered the room and approached the group of Captains. “There's been an attack at The AME Tournament!” Pless informed them. “An attack?” Draper asked. “Yes and the Pollydroop Factory was also attacked. Both by mutant monsters.” “Well what should we do?” Draper asked. “Nothing, apparently. The authorities have neutralized the threats and have encouraged us to continue with the remainder of the cruise.” “Great, so we can eat and party! Right?” Doggle nervously asked. “As of now, we are all free to wander about the ship and indulge ourselves in the frivolous activities at hand,” Pless informed them. “Have fun at dinner. I'm going to get another massage,” Pless added before making a quick exit of the observation room. Draper, Doggle, and Feverlyn breathed a collective sigh of relief and looked out the window at the tranquil waters below. “It feels good to be a regular citizen for a night,” Draper said aloud. They enjoyed the aquatic scene before joining a thousand Captains and sponsors, including Hooligan and Stitcher, in a dining room on the floor below and eating a masterfully prepared meal of salmon, wild-berry gravy, and rice.

CHAPTER 8

Later that night after returning home to The Dozenth, having been flown by a pilot in a red and white Pollydroop helicopter, Heartin sat on the couch, looking at the screen of the glass tablet in the living room. He watched the end of a movie and the credits rolled. “Call Wakulla,” Heartin said and the screen displayed the image of a holographic telephone. There was a ringing noise for a moment, but no answer. Heartin sighed and laid back into the couch cushion. “Play this evening's AME Tournament Celebration.” The screen lit up with images of the giant green sea monster that ruined the celebration. An accompanying narration provided by a news reporter described the terrifying scene. The image was interrupted by a call. Once again the holographic image of the phone was on display. It was Wakulla. Her image appeared. She was sitting in a chair behind a desk looking at a computer tablet screen in her bedroom of an elevated birdhouse a few miles away. “Hey, Heartin,” she answered.

“Hey, what happened today?”

“Heartin, it was chaos. I was eating my cotton candy blowfish and suddenly someone screamed and there was a giant monster destroying everything! Just as the beast was about to snatch up a little boy, I took the boy into my arms as Cursor and Leodus knocked the monster unconscious. It was unbelievably terrifying. Most exciting AME Celebration I've ever seen.”

“Sounds exhilarating,” Heartin responded.

“What about you?” How'd it go at the factory?”

“Pretty crazily really. There was a monster in the Pollydroop.”

“A monster? In the Pollydroop?”

“Yeah. Turns out it was just an overgrown mutated alligator. The animal, unnoticed, wandered into the building and attacked a factory worker and a security guard!”

“What?! Really?”

“Yes really. Professor Craddleson and I subdued the animal by spraying it with Freezelyne. It was like a really horrific dream with a good ending.”

“That's…I don't know exactly what that is.”

“A nerve racking coincidence I suppose.”

“Yes. Exactly that. Crazy day.”

“It got even crazier. After capturing the alligator, Professor Craddleson offered me an endorsement from the Pollydroop Corporation. They'll be sponsoring me for the rest of the tournament.”

“Oh, Heartin, that's great. Good for you.”

“Thanks,” Heartin answered, “Kind of peculiar really.”

“How so? You should be rewarded for the effort if Professor Craddleson sees fit.”

“No not that. Two dangerous monsters on the same day. Weird, isn't it.”

“Yes, I suppose. But no one was hurt. It all worked out for the best.”

“Yeah, I guess. Still kinda weird.”

“Yeah,” Wakulla paused for a moment before continuing. “I bet you're exhausted,” Wakulla said.

“No, not at all,” Heartin hastily responded, “A little soar is all.” Heartin used his hand to rub his shoulder. “I was just watching a movie,” he added.

“What movie?”

“The Pirate and The Illusive Treasure Hunt.”

“Really. I've never seen it.”

“It's interesting. The pirates rip their treasure map in half and can't find the treasure until they connect the pieces back together.”

“Hm. Sounds cool.”

“It surprised me.”

“Surprised you?”

“I thought it was going to be just another pirate movie with swashbuckling and booty theft, but it was actually well thought out. I think it was supposed to mean something more.”

“And what more could that be?”

“I think the makers of the film were trying to make a satire of present society.”

“In what way?”

“Well I think the two main pirates represented polar opposite ends of a political structure. Meaning no society will ever reach its fullest potential until people come together. Until then we'll all be lost. Love and kindness are society’s treasures.”

Wakulla takes a moment to think this over before responding.

“Do you agree with the film maker’s sentiment?”

“I do. Reading a torn map is like reading half of a story. The rest of the idea is important to mediation. Why have honor or glory at all if only for oneself?”

“I’m not sure. A sense of self accomplishment could serve as motivation enough.”

“It could, but that could lead to the feeling of chasing an unattainable prize which would leave one longing for an exchange of emotional currency, something of value.”

“A happy life has value.”

To that notion, Heartin had no response. “But what do you think about it?” he asked. Wakulla paused for a moment, looking down and rubbing her chin. Heartin eyed the girl longingly. ‘If only I could kiss her now’ he thought as he stared at the shape of her pink lips and shining earthy eyes. Wakulla was wearing a blue and orange silky robe over her shoulders covering the matching night gown she wore underneath. The robe hung to one side exposing her shoulder and the round edges of her jiggly breasts. Her nipples could be seen poking through the material of her gown. Heartin looked her up and down. “I guess I’ll have to watch the movie, but I believe the means justify the ends. One’s own inspiring internal void can only be filled with the journey that fits the void,” Wakulla explained.

“How would you go about it?”

“I would allow my natural emotional inclinations to lead the way.”

“Sounds a little irrational. Chaotic.”

“Not really. Everyone has instincts. Something told us to eat, hunt and play. It's the same kind of feeling when you're chasing your dreams. You know when you've done the right thing.”

“Not always. Sometimes you fail and realize maybe you shouldn't have tried at all.”

“If you never make an attempt then you’ll have no chance of finding any treasure at all.”

Heartin nodded his head in agreement.

“Is that why you're in the tournament? To find a treasure,” Wakulla asked. Heartin looked up at the ceiling in contemplation. This time Wakulla was the one doing the eyeing. Wakulla gazed at Heartin’s strong chin, neck, and shoulders as he thought. Heartin looked down from the ceiling and to the tablet screen as he answered.

“I guess you can say that. I want to be a hero which I think is much the same. What's your treasure?”

“I think you only hunt for treasure if you need one. I’d love to be a certified athlete and travel the world dazzling crowds. Sounds like a treasure just for me, pretentiously, possibly.”

“I guess you could see it that way, but I don't think the audience would agree. Bringing people joy should be rewarded as well. That's a treasure for everyone.”

Heartin always had a way of taking a closer look at things, a most attractive quality to Wakulla.

“I'd like to think so,” Wakulla answered and then thought for a moment before asking, “What do your parents make of the ordeal?”

“I'm not sure. They've scheduled a transmission for tomorrow. I'll speak to them then.”

“Good. My mother was very upset. Huffing and puffing about it all. Calling for more security measures at the stadium. I found it hilarious.”

Wakulla and Heartin shared a laugh. Heartin's stomach growled a loud growl that shook him and his couch. “You should eat. Your stomach sounds like an alligator,” Wakulla said. Heartin chuckled.

“I did. I had a sandwich at the Pollydroop Factory and again when I got home. I've also eaten an entire meatloaf and twenty-seven breakfast biscuits.”

“You must've overexerted yourself today. Eat. And get some rest,” Wakulla instructed. “You do the same Love…I mean, Wakulla” answered Heartin. “What’d you say?” Wakulla asked. “Wakulla. Good night. I was saying. I'll see you tomorrow.” “Right. I'll see you then,” Wakulla said and tapped the screen of her glass tablet. Her image disappeared. Heartin sulked his way to the kitchen with a hand on his stomach. He opened the refrigerator and looked inside. It was empty. Heartin closed the refrigerator and made his way into the elevator of The Dozenth. Once at the bottom of the pillar, Heartin exited the elevator and stepped into the surrounding woods. Heartin spotted a tall moonfruit tree. High

on a branch swung a grey skinned fruit with a bright purple fruity meat inside. Heartin gathered himself and jumped up, grabbing the lowest branch of the tree. Heartin then climbed his way up using only his arms to swing from branch to branch. Once at the branch holding the fruit, Heartin reached out and pulled the moonfruit from the branch. Heartin held the fruit under his arm as he lowered himself down the trunk of the tree. Before reaching the bottom Heartin heard a sort of hissing noise. Heartin looked down at the ground below. There stood a giant raccoon, two enures tall. “Out of the way!” Heartin screamed as his eyes blackened and his fingernails protruded outward. This startled the raccoon and the animal scurried away. Heartin relaxed and made his way down to the final branch where he swung for a moment before dropping to the ground. Heartin walked back through the woods with the moonfruit tucked under his arm. Once he arrived at The Dozenth, he made his way up to his living room using the elevator. Heartin found his way to his bed and laid down with a bounce, the fruit still in hand. Heartin used one hand to pull off his clothes, tossed the articles to the side and took a bite of the moonfruit, chewing right through the skin. He smiled to himself as he chewed. His life had taken an incredible turn and Heartin couldn't wait to see what tomorrow would bring.

Fazer, Eneed, Tunton, Sorkin, Briles and Scorer rode in a black dome-shaped tactical truck through the city streets in pursuit of the Oglicians cave. Once at the cave they entered and approached several cages housing vicious creatures. In different cages there were bullpers, colorful bulls with some frog DNA, goblamonkees, hairless monkeys with sharp fangs and claws, porcupawns, bear-sized porcupines with long sharp pins protruding from their bodies, and penguipeckers, penguins that

could fly. The penguipeckers were in large birdcages that hung from the ceiling. There were three-thousand and forty animals total. Eneed and Scorer fed the animals scraps of meat while Tunton, Sorkin and Briles gave the caged animals a yellow-green liquid in dog bowls. The animals drank away and the concoction seemed to energize them. The creatures started jumping around in their cages and pulling at the bars that held them. Fazor pet a goblamonkee as he fed it a glowing pink banana. “Things are coming together nicely. Many of the strongest Captains are busy getting drunk on the Captain's Cruise. All we must do is wait for the perfect moment to make our move,” he said with a wicked chuckle.

The AME Tournament continued the next day with the athletes competing at their highest level. The good folks at Pollydroop volunteered to repair the pool and the swimming competitions would continue the following day. Heartin woke up early, dressed himself and finished his moonfruit before making his way to The Combat Stadium. Cursor helped Heartin prepare for his joust by dressing Heartin in a suit of blue Pollydroop armor. Cursor then gave Heartin a pair of blue and black Pollydrooper Comet shoes, a gift from Professor Craddleson. Heartin stepped into the shoes and went off to participate in The AME Tournament's Candy Cane Joust where the most intelligent earthly perceivers, mammals that made advanced cognitive decisions, would clash from ironically elevated positions on top of stronger submissive servient similarly categorized beings with artistically influenced existences to the amusement of an impatiently anticipating crowd.

CHAPTER 9

Heartin entered The Sand Field Auditorium of The Combat Stadium to the delight of the crowd. The auditorium had been prepared for the joust with a long Pollydroop jousting bar at its center to separate the two competitors. Heartin's opponent, a placosis man in red armor, then entered the room to a similar welcome. Two sweet smelling well-trained animals, a lime green mustang and a bright orange Morgan horse, were brought into the arena, escorted by two officials in grey and black suits. The animals were genetically enhanced giving them a delicious sugary smell. Heartin and his opponent were given candy cane lances, both three enures long. Heartin and his opponent mounted their horses and trotted to opposite sides of the jousting track. The riders pulled on their reins and the horses waved at the audience with a lifted hoof. The crowd waved back and an official lifted a hand in the air signaling the beginning of the match. The competitors rode on opposite sides of the long separating pole in between them with great speed and clashed once they met at its center. Both candy canes exploded once making contact with the riders, but neither of them fell from their horses. The officials handed both of the riders new candy cane lances and they rode again. This time Heartin’s candy cane was broken in half and he fell from the horse. The crowd cheered. Hundreds of years of Solareen tradition lived on through the bloodstreams of the viewers and the breaths of the courageous competitors as their armor clanked and their steeds galloped in glory.

Heartin dusted himself off and remounted his horse. He would be given a chance to tie the match. After Heartin received a

new candy cane the riders rode again. This time both riders failed to connect. They rode again. On this trip down the bar Heartin was the one to knock his opponent down. His lance exploded on contact. His opponent landed on the ground with a loud clank. The crowd cheered. Heartin’s opponent grabbed hold of his candy cane lance, which remained unbroken, and remounted his horse. Heartin received another lance and they rode to break the tie. The riders galloped wholeheartedly as the crowd erupted with screams of anticipation. Once they met in the middle both riders aimed their lances and connected with their opponents. Both lances broke, Heartin’s into two pieces and his opponent’s into nothing but the handle left in his hand. Heartin fell off of his horse. His opponent leaned to the side and it seemed, for just a moment, as if he would fall, but he did not. Heartin’s opponent remained on his horse and won the match. When Heartin hit the ground his body protectively transformed itself into its reeptilorm form. Heartin shrieked. He shook his head trying to focus. The screams of the crowd were dizzying for Heartin and he struggled to stand. His toenails poked holes into the front of his new Pollydroop Comets. His opponent, who took a galloping victory lap around the track, was awarded one-hundred thousand crispies. The crowd applauded. Heartin shook his head and stood. Heartin, his opponent, and the sweet smelling horses, waved to the crowd and exited The Sand Field Auditorium. Cursor applauded Heartin’s performance upon his arrival in the Team Everforce training room. “Great job. I know jousting isn't your strong suit,” Cursor said.

“I’ll do better next time.”

“I'm sure you will. Now, take a moment to rest.”

And with that Heartin went off to the men's locker room. The hallway outside of the locker rooms was mostly empty except for Wakulla, Laslur, and a placosis athlete, a woman with the ears and nose of a cat. Wakulla, dressed in a Flyers jumpsuit, sat on the floor as Laslur approached.

“Wakulla, I tried to call you last night. What happened?”

“Nothing happened. And I'm fine.”

“I was worried. That was scary, yesterday, wasn't it. I'm glad no one got hurt.”

“Yeah, me too. I thought you were going to come to the celebration.”

“That's what I said, but”

Wakulla interrupted Laslur's speech. “You were embarrassed. You lost your race. Or is that an unfair presumption?” Wakulla asked as she stood, looking Laslur in his eyes.

“Embarrassed? No, I didn't stretch properly before the race and I’ve been saving my energy for the later rounds of the tournament,” Laslur explained in a matter of fact tone. “We all lose every once in a while. Anyway, let's walk the beach later today after we compete,” Laslur said.

“I don't know if I'm feeling the beach after last night's fiasco.”

“Oh right.”

“Where were you when the monster arrived?”

“I was um…I don't remember exactly.”

“You don't remember where you were when a giant sea monster attacked the building you were inside of?”

“I don't remember *exactly*. I think I was…I was in the men's locker room. Yes, that's where I was.” Laslur leaned in close to Wakulla and put his hand on her shoulder” “I would never have left you or any of those other people in danger. I've always got your back,” he added.

Wakulla looked down at Laslur's hand and he took it away. “Come to the beach with me tonight. They cleaned the beach and there were extra police everywhere. We’ll be fine,” Laslur insisted. “I'll think about it,” Wakulla answered. “Take all the time you need. Actually, not all the time. An amount of time that ends before tonight…when we go…to the beach…hopefully.” He replied. Wakulla agreed and Laslur went off to prepare for his event. Today Laslur would be competing in the treasure race. Wakulla exited the hallway and went off to race the obstacle course. She fared well in the event, coming in third place, but nevertheless she was disappointed in the result.

Heartin passed Laslur on his way towards the locker rooms while Wakulla went off in the opposite direction. The two shared a nasty look and Laslur continued up the hall. Tin entered the men's

locker room and removed his armor. He put on his Team Everforce tracksuit and stretched his legs in preparation for the next event. He was tired and soar from having jousted, but his best event was next. Today's lineup of events featured a maze race through a garden lined with concrete walls covered in draping exotic vines. Heartin talked with Cursor for a moment before the race and they devised a strategy. Heartin entered Sand Field Auditorium B which held a large sand field that was prepared for the race with the addition of concrete vine-covered walls and red bushes, that stood two enures high, that were planted in various places in the maze. Heartin stepped up to the starting line alongside five other competitors including Tunton, Eneed, Magnara, Sorkin, and Astrinae. The competitors were all dressed in their team tracksuits. Each competitor was equipped with a small circular device the size of a wrist watch. The device had a strap that allowed it to be attached to the palm of the hand. There was a scoring sensor in the face of the device. The competition was a game of Tag-The-Lynx.

The officiating crew escorted three gold lynx to the maze and set the animals free to roam. The object of the competition was to successfully place a hand on one of the golden lynx. Upon tagging the lynx the competitor is awarded a point and must stand in one place for fifteen seconds to give the lynx time to run off and provide other competitors a chance to tag the lynx. The competitors were to chase the lynx for five minutes at a time in three consecutive periods called rounds. The athlete with the most points at the end of the three rounds would be considered the winner. Commissioner Emblemson was in attendance of the race, watching from a tunnel that led to a board room for committee members. Wakulla looked on from a seat in the stands

surrounding the field. Heartin, Magnara, Eneed, Tunton, Astrinae and Scorer all took their starting positions at different entrances to the maze. An official gave the signal, a whistle blew, and the competition began. The six competitors entered the maze.

The bushes of the maze were organized to create dozens of hiding places for the lynx. The three gold lynx found their way to pathways near the center of the maze and awaited searching athletes. Heartin quickly sprinted through the first part of the path which lay before him which led to a split path. The splits in the path went in opposite directions. Heartin went to the left. Heartin ran down the long path to another split. This time he went right. There wasn't a lynx in sight. A loud dinging noise sounded throughout the stadium and Heartin stopped running for a moment. Heartin looked up at the glass tablet box hanging above the track. The tablet was displaying a holographic scoreboard. The ding signified a competitor’s successful tag of a lynx. Magnara already had one point.

Heartin continued on, searching for a lynx to tag. Finally he spotted a speedy lynx running from its hiding place behind one of the red bushes at the end of a pathway. Heartin pursued and the lynx turned the corner of the pathway. Heartin ran to the end of the pathway and turned the same corner. Once around the corner Heartin looked around for the lynx to no avail. There was now another split pathway before him. Ding! The signal of another successful tag rang through the auditorium. Tunton had tagged a lynx. Heartin chose to search the right side of the split pathway and alas he found a lynx with its back turned to him. Heartin quietly stepped towards the lynx until he was just a few feet away from making his first tag. The lynx licked its right paw before it

turned its head and spotted Heartin in his approach. The lynx began to run. Heartin chased after the animal which was quickly creating a distance between them. Heartin jumped up high and grabbed the vines on the grass wall of the maze. Heartin then used his feet to push himself off of the wall. Heartin soared through the air for a moment and landed within arm's reach of the lynx. Heartin reached out with his hand and tagged the lynx. Ding! The glass tablet signified confirmation of Heartin’s tag. Heartin stood in place as the lynx scoffed and ran off to another pathway of the maze.

Heartin looked at the glass tablet scoreboard for a moment when…Ding! The sound of another tag rang. Ding! And another. Every competitor had scored a point. It was just one minute into the match. After waiting for the full fifteen seconds Heartin ran off again back down the pathway in which he came. Heartin made his way down the other end of the split path and came to a trail with three pathways at its end. Heartin took the path to the left. This path had two occupants, Magnara and a cunning lynx. Magnara chased the lynx towards Heartin who stood in place as he awaited their approach. The lynx ran to within a foot of being tagged by Heartin when the animal crouched down low and scurried around him. Magnara ran after the animal, giving Heartin a stiff push, in a bit of defense, as she passed by him. Heartin stumbled as Magnara continued on. Heartin was frustrated and his nails began to protrude. His eyes blackened and his exoskeleton materialized. He grew and ran off after Magnara and the lynx. The lynx led them down a string of pathways before reaching a dead end. The lynx brought its running to a stop and turned around to face Magnara and Heartin who weren't far behind. Magnara and Heartin stopped in front of the lynx, trapping

the animal. The lynx ran to its left and jumped onto the wall of the maze in an attempt to make its way around the two competitors. Magnara was closest to the lynx and reached out for the animal, but couldn't lay a hand on it. The lynx pushed itself from the wall into the air and Heartin leapt, meeting the animal in flight. Heartin reached out a hand and tagged the animal before they both came to a safe landing on the pathway. Ding! Heartin had scored another point. Heartin stood in place as Magnara ran by him. “Nice tag,’ Magnara said as she continued on after the lynx. A replay of Heartin’s tag played on the glass tablet above. The crowd cheered. The stands rumbled and shook and an anticipatory buzz electrified with piercing promise of unpredictable exhilaration and satisfaction. The incredible talents of the participating enhanced humans that sprinted through the maze and lunged for their targets were observed with an analytic eye while monetary transactions based on the competition’s outcome drove the combustion of the crowds constant explosion.

The match was halfway over. After fifteen seconds Heartin ran off again down the pathway which led to another. Ding! Ding! Ding! A series of bell sounds signaled the scoring of several competitors. Heartin picked up his pace, running feverishly in search of another lynx. Heartin roamed the pathways of the maze without spotting a lynx. At one point he passed Eneed who was running in the opposite direction. Heartin gave Eneed a nod as she passed. Eneed kept her eyes on the path ahead of her and passed without giving Heartin a look. Eneed reached the end of the pathway and turned the corner. Heartin reached the end of the opposite end of the path and turned to the right down another path. This path had a circular patch at its end with a single fountain at its center. There was a large gold statue of a lynx in

the middle of the fountain pool. Heartin approached the statue while taking a moment to admire its beauty as he approached. As Heartin got closer to the statue a live golden lynx jumped out from its hiding place behind the statue. Heartin reached out as the lynx flew through the air and he made an athletic tag of the animal. Ding! The scoring bell sounded and then a horn that indicated the round was over. The competitors found their way back to their starting points as the crowd applauded. The scoreboard displayed the score of the first round. Heartin had three points. Tunton had two. Magnara had three points. Eneed had two points. Scorer had two points and Astrinae had four.

Commissioner Emblemson watched on from the tunnel and clapped excitedly. “Beautiful, just beautiful! Excellent first round.” The competitors waited at their starting points outside of the maze and awaited the start of the next round. A horn sounded and the second round began. The competitors entered the maze and scattered about. Heartin breathed slowly as he jogged through the maze. He felt at home in the predatory environment. That very feeling was why he enjoyed living in The Dozenth. His predatory instincts played to his advantage in this competition. There wasn't much thinking to do. Heartin could let loose and let his mind be free. The object was simple. Catch the lynx. Heartin felt like he could let himself loose without fear of losing control during the match. He jogged along casually enjoying the advantages of his reeptilorm form. His experience in the competition, which he had practiced for by catching raccoons in the woods of Solareen, gave him internal permission to set his abilities free he thought, however Wakulla’s presence in the crowd had an unidentified positive affect on his countenance and physical ability. Heartin then encountered a lynx on a pathway near the middle of the

maze. Heartin reached out and made a tag. Ding! Heartin waited in place for fifteen seconds and then continued on as a few dings sounded in the arena. All of the competitors were making impressive tags.

Heartin quickly encountered another lynx and another shortly after, making two more tags in the first half of the match. The crowd was roaring with delight. Commissioner Emblemson clapped with all his might. ‘This type of action is just what the tournament needed after yesterday’s incident,’ he thought to himself. Heartin was able to make thee more tags before the second round came to a close with one round left to be played. The competitors made their way back to different starting places and switched their entry points for the last round. Heartin now had nine points. Magnara had eight. Tunton had four. Scorer had seven. Eneed had six and Astrinae was in the lead with ten points. A horn sounded and the competitors ran into the maze again.

Heartin found his way to the fountain with the lynx statue once again, but this time there was no lynx to be found. Heartin turned back in the opposite direction and found a lynx creeping from one pathway to another. Heartin ran after the lynx and the animal sped off entering a pathway where Eneed was jogging along. Eneed noticed the lynx from one end of the path and Heartin chased from the other. The lynx stood in the middle and awaited the approach of the two competitors. Eneed jumped for the lynx first and then Heartin. Eneed made a tag while Heartin missed. Ding! Eneed stood in place while the lynx ran off. Heartin took a moment to collect himself. “Excellent move,” Heartin said.

“I know,” Eneed answered. Heartin turned away and ran after the lynx.

Ding! Ding! Two more tags were made. Heartin made his way through many of the pathways as time ticked away. The round was halfway over when he spotted Magnara at the end of the pathway. Magnara was in pursuit of another lynx. The lynx she chased attempted to use the wall as a spring to avoid being tagged, but Magnara stepped in front of the lynx and caught the animal in her arms. Ding! Magnara had scored again. Magnara set the animal on the ground and the lynx ran off. Heartin ran down the pathway after the lynx. The lynx led Heartin down a path where the other two lynx had met at a point in the maze. Tunton and Astrinae were also on this pathway. The three lynx met at the middle of the pathway with Heartin, Astrinae and Tunton approaching from both sides. The lynx split up in different directions with one of them moving closer to Astrinae and Tunton while the other two moved towards Heartin. The three lynx attempted to use the walls to jump up and avoid the competitors. Astrinae and Tunton lunged for the lynx before they simultaneously tagged the animal. Heartin ran to the wall to his right and jumped up, using his feet to push off the wall into the air, tagging one lynx in the process. Heartin's jump sent him flying to the opposite wall of the pathway where the third lynx was attempting a similar jump. Heartin and the lynx crossed paths in the air and Heartin reached out, tagging the lynx with his left hand. Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Heartin, Astrinae and Tunton had all scored. The final horn sounded and the match came to an end. The crowd applauded the captivating end of the match. Commissioner Emblemson was clearly pleased. “Again. One more round!” he joked. There wasn't need for another round. The

final score clearly indicated the winner. Heartin had twelve points. Scorer had nine. Magnara had ten. Eneed had ten. Tunton had ten and Astrinae had eleven. Heartin had won. The final tags were deciding ones in the close match. An official lifted one of Heartin's hands up in the air. Wakulla and the rest of the crowd cheered. Commissioner Emblemson was elated and did a strange little dance with both arms moving from side to side. “Excellent. A win will be extremely beneficial to the cause!” An AME Ambassador, a soldieresque man with broad shoulders, holding a small Pollydroop trophy, with a gold figurine shaped like Enchantra, and a clear glass plate, entered The Sand Field Auditorium via the Committee entrance. The ambassador was in pursuit of a podium near an entrance to the garden maze. “No. Wait. Let me,” Commissioner Emblemson said as he held out his hand, stopping the ambassador mid pursuit. Commissioner Emblemson took hold of the trophy and the plate and mounted the podium facing the crowd of celebrating fans. Commissioner Emblemson quieted the crowd and began to speak.

“What an exciting race. Truly impressive. I'm proud to say our efforts in creating a fun, friendly, competitive atmosphere has paid off despite our unfortunate incident yesterday. Workers from our good friends at Pollydroop are speedily repairing the damage done during the opening ceremony celebration.” He looked at Heartin. “Heartin, come,” Commissioner Emblemson said as he waved for Heartin to approach. Heartin took the stage next to Commissioner Emblemson and the commissioner handed Heartin the trophy and the glass plate.

Heartin gazed at the trophy and it shone in his eyes. He looked at the holographic image in the glass plate. ‘One-Hundred

Thousand Crispies’ it read. The plate was a check for one hundred thousand crispies and the holographic image was in the shape of a crispie bill. “Heartin, as winner of the Catch-The-Lynx Maze Race, you have been awarded this Pollydroop trophy and one-hundred thousand crispies!” Commissioner Emblemson said with a big smile. The crowd cheered. “This is surely a sign that our attention to protecting our athletes will pay off in the form of more entertaining games. May this be the greatest AME Tournament yet!” And with that final address Commissioner Emblemson turned from the crowd to face Heartin. “Perfect Heartin. Well done,” said the commissioner as he gave Heartin a pat on the back. Commissioner Emblemson and Heartin dismounted the podium and Emblemson went off to the tunnel. Heartin walked around the sand field and to the doors that lead to a hallway. The other competitors were in the hallway, all heading for their respective locker rooms. Cursor met Heartin in the hall.

“How's about a high five. C’mon jump up,” Cursor joked. Heartin laughed. “You did phenomenal as I knew you would.” Jandria, a brown skinned older woman with short strands of red in her black hair, and Garleton, a dark brown man with a big stomach, a bald head, and brown eyes, one of which was a little crooked, with an AME Tournament sports cap on his head, both dressed in draping tribal patterns, approached Heartin. Jandria was just a little bit shorter than Heartin and Garleton was just a little bit taller. Jandria and Harleton, old friends of Heartin's parents, were the owners of The Dozenth and allowed Heartin to stay there for free. Winton and Surge have been exploring in space for the last decade and the home they and Heartin grew up in was sold and is now inhabited by another family in Solareen. Jandria and Garleton have seen videos of Heartin compete, but

this was the first time they got to see him race in person. “Galaxia! You're phenomenal!” Garleton said as he gave Heartin a slap on the shoulder. Jandria gave Heartin a big hug and rubbed him on the shoulder Garleton slapped. “You're stronger than you used to be,” Jandria said, “Nice run. But you were so close.” Jandria kissed Heartin on the forehead. “When was the last time you spoke to Wintin and Surge?” she asked.

“It's been a few months or so. Have you talked to them?”

“For a moment, about a week ago, Garleton answered. “And what did they say,” Heartin asked, “Another extension I presume?” Heartin questioned. “Not exactly,” Garleton answered, “but everything is going to be okay.” Jadria interjected, “The Pollyexplorer was designed with parts that are easy to fix and replace, but they've had it for a while and polyethylene is hard to find in the galaxy.”

“I'm sure they'll find a way to fix everything and they'll be home soon,” Garleton added, “They said they want you to focus on the tournament.” “And they love you very much. With all of the stars in Galaxia!” Jandria said. “They’ll be at a transmission station tomorrow they said,” Garleton promised. “We'll stop by The Dozenth sometime soon,” Jandria added. “Great,” Heartin said, “Love you. Galaxia.” “Galaxia,” Harleton and Winston said and they made exit of The Combat Stadium. “Excellent,” Cursor said, giving Heartin a wink.

“Heartin!” Wakulla called from the end of the hall. Wakulla ran up to Heartin and gave him a sort of sideways hug, making sure not to knock the trophy or plate out of his hand. ‘Best day

ever’ Heartin thought to himself. A trophy, a hundred thousand crispies, a hug? Was this really happening? “Let’s eat,” Wakulla suggested. “Superb idea,” said Cursor. “Wakulla!” Laslur yelled from near an entrance to the hallway. Laslur quickly approached. “Heartin, Congrats,” Laslur said as he reached out a hand. Heartin shuffled his trophy in his arms and reached out a hand. They shook. “Wakulla are you still coming to the beach?” Laslur quickly asked. “I told you I hadn't decided,” Wakulla answered. “Yes, you said you'd think about it and I was just checking to see if you were still thinking about it or if you had come to a decision,” Laslur responded in a matter of factly tone. “I’ve been thinking about my competition,” Wakulla answered sternly. “Understandably so, I’m getting ready for my race as well. Which I am going to win. Unquestionably,” Laslur said. Cursor interjected. “Come Heartin. To the cafeteria,” Cursor said as he and Heartin went off down the hallway. “Save me a place, Heartin,” Wakulla called out as Heartin and Cursor turned the corner at the end of the hallway and then were no longer in view.

“I'm not really feeling the beach tonight. Maybe some other time,” Wakulla quickly said, snapping her head around to face Laslur. “Well then what are you feeling?” Laslur asked. “I don't know. I might just relax at home tonight. I'll probably be tired after my obstacle race,” Wakulla answered. “We could just lay on the beach for a while. That would be relaxing wouldn't it?” Laslur suggested. Wakulla thought about it for a moment. “Maybe it would be,” Wakulla answered.

“Good. Maybe. Again. If you decide, come find me. I'll be there with some of the other athletes.”

“If they'll be there then you won't need me.”

“No, forget them. I want you there.”

“Why?”

Laslur took a moment to think.

“Why not? We should have a bit of fun,” Laslur answered. Wakulla thought it was a good answer.

“Can Heartin and Cursor come?*

“Why do they have to come? We should walk the beach alone. Just the two of us.”

“Your friends are going to be there. Why can't I bring my friends?”

“You have a point,” Laslur answered, “Well, if that'll get you to come, then so be it. Bring them.” “I shall,” Wakulla answered as she turned away. Wakulla went off down the hall. Laslur stood there for a moment watching Wakulla walk down the hall.

CHAPTER 10

Commissioner Emblemson sat in the backseat of an autonomous cream colored Pollydroop car, speeding down a road that led from The Combat Stadium to the freeway that eventually led to his mansion home. The evening sky was orange and red and a large red moon shone like a big fruit hanging above. Commissioner Emblemson was looking at a glass tablet on the dashboard. The dashboard display was an image of Rawra, dressed in a red silk robe, who transmitted from their home. The Emblemsons lived in a cavernous mansion made completely out of rock. “You and Heartin are all over the news. The public loves a redemption story,” Rawra informs. Commissioner Emblemson nods. “Very good,” Commissioner Emblemson looked at the screen with a blank stare. His mind was still on yesterday's events.

“What's wrong, Ernie?” Rawra asked. The commissioner’s first name is Ernestsad. “The tournament attacked by a giant sea monster and the Pollydroop Factory terrorized by a mutated alligator on the same day. Very strange," the commissioner answered. “Yes, there hasn't been a monster invasion breach at an AME event for forty seven years. I saw that on the news,” Rawra said in response. “And you. Are you truly satisfied with the results? This will surely distract people from more capable athletes with more marketing potential.” she inquired.

“Heartin’s performance will determine his marketing potential. Maybe he'll surprise us all. As long as people enjoy the tournament, I will be pleased.”

“If you're pleased so then pleased I will be,” said Rawra, “See you at home.” And with that the transmission ended. The commissioner reclined the back of the seat of his chair and leaned backwards resting his eyes as the Pollydroop car led him down the freeway towards his home.

The orange and red sky sent moon rays beaming down on the Pollydroop freeway. The tranquility of flying birds and swaying trees waved throughout Solareen. It was a beautiful city. There were large Pollydroop buildings and creatively built homes in suburbs with clean streets that sparkled in the light and glowed a bright green neon color in the night. In the sky, out of the yellow clouds, a person wearing a jetpack shaped like a pair of wings came flying downwards in pursuit of the freeway where Commissioner Emblemson was finally beginning to relax. It was a man wearing a silver, purple, and white, mechanized foil jumpsuit suit with a pink lining and boots that connected to the suit. The wings of the jetpack were dirty silver and had thrusters on their ends. The man wore a silver helmet on his head. The helmet had a pink visor that covered his eyes. On his hands were large silver gloves with the fingers cut off. The tips of his dark green fingers and black nails could be seen poking out the gloves. He held his arms tightly by his side and swooped down thousands of feet as if falling from heaven with the jets pushing him downward at an incredible speed. The commissioner's Pollydroop car was speeding along the freeway. Just one mile from reaching the freeway the man with mechanical wings adjusted his arms to a

position out in front of him and the thrusters of the jetpack adjusted their positions which changed the man's falling trajectory in a direction towards the commissioner. The man flew to a position over the commissioner's car, keeping steady pace with the vehicle below. The man lowered himself to the car and landed on the hood without a sound, grabbing hold of the sides of the car with his long arms. The commissioner was falling asleep inside. The man with the jetpack extended his long black nails to a length of two feet. The man with the jetpack then took one hand from its place on the side of the car and used it to stab the roof of the Pollydroop car. This startled the commissioner and he sat up in his chair. The man on top of the car jabbed his other hand through the top of the car and his two feet nails stuck downward in front of the commissioner. The commissioner growled and tapped the glass screen to indicate an emergency alert. The man with the jetpack shifted his legs and put his feet on top of the hood of the car. He pulled his arms around the hood of the Pollydroop car with his hands, using his nails to cut the top. He then pulled upward and popped the top of the Pollydroop car. Emblemson looked up at him and growled again. The man with the jetpack threw the top of the car and the car came to a screeching halt. The man reached into the car and the commissioner lunged at the man in the form of an attack. The man with the jetpack used one arm to fend off the commissioner, who was weary of coming in contact with the long nails of the man, and the other arm to reach down and grab the commissioner before pulling him up out of the vehicle. The man with the jetpack pulled Commissioner Emblemson up close to his body, grabbed him tight and leapt from the hood of the car into the air. The jets of the wings ignited and Commissioner Emblemson struggled to be freed until the man with the jetpack flew to a height where a fall would be deadly.

The two of them flew off into the evening sky while the horn of the Pollydroop car’s alert system blared.

Heartin, Cursor and Wakulla were just finishing their meals as they sat around a Pollydroop table in the massive cafeteria of The Combat Stadium. They were indulging in the carcasses of three flavor enhanced mutated pigeons that had shiny red feathers before being cooked. The pigeons had a strawberry flavored skeleton and the red bones lay on the plates of the table in front of them. Heartin burped a loud rumbling burp. Wakulla laughed and burped herself. Cursor laughed and burped a burp that shook the entire room like an earthquake. Ambassador Burtonin quickly entered the room and approached the table of diners. “Cursor, quickly, come with me,” Ambassador Burtonin pleaded. “What's the matter, Ambassador Burtonin?” Cursor asked. “It's an emergency. I'll explain. Please come with me,” Ambassador Burtonin said as he gestured towards the door. Cursor and Ambassador Burtonin quickly exited the cafeteria. Wakulla turned to Heartin. “What do you think about going to the beach after my race? Laslur and a bunch of people are going to be there. A party of sorts,” Wakulla inquired. “That sounds fun, but I don't think Laslur would want me there,” Heartin answered. “He's the one that invited you,” Wakulla answered back. “I'm supposed to talk to my parents in the morning,” Heartin said in response. He wasn't thrilled about the idea of hanging out with Laslur. He could tell Laslur had his eyes on Wakulla and was jealous of their relationship even though they were just good friends. “Then we’ll just go for a minute or two and leave. It'll be fun,” Wakulla insisted. Heartin contemplated the proposition for a moment before answering. “Just a minute or two? Sure, I guess.” “Okay great!” Wakulla said, “I'll meet you after my race.” Wakulla stood

from the table and exited the cafeteria. Heartin grabbed one of the red bones off of the table and put it in his mouth. He chewed the bone in a single crunch and swallowed. Heartin burped one more time and stood from the table. Cursor re-entered the cafeteria and called out to Heartin. “Heartin come quick,” Cursor said, “Someone has kidnapped Commissioner Emblemson!”

The attendees of The AME Tournament were gathered in various auditoriums watching the large glass-tablet screens that hung in the center of each room. The screens displayed an image of the podium that stood beside the field of Grass Field Auditorium A and in front of the crowded stands. Burtonin was in that auditorium approaching the podium. Wakulla had made her way to the edge of the field. Heartin and Cursor came to Wakulla's side. Burtonin mounted the podium and approached the microphone. “Ladies, gentlemen, humans and mutants alike, I regretfully inform you all that Commissioner Emblemson is missing. His vehicle was found with considerable damage and video recordings from the inside of the vehicle indicate a kidnapping. The proper authorities are investigating the situation. The games will continue as scheduled. That is all the information I have for now. I encourage everyone to carry on with the festivities of this year’s AME Tournament and there will be a reward of five-hundred thousand crispies for anyone with information regarding Commissioner Emblemson’s disappearance. That is all,” said Ambassador Burtonin before he stepped down from the podium. The crowd murmured concerned whispers. Heartin, Wakulla and Cursor exited the auditorium into a hallway that led to the locker rooms. As they walked the halls they discussed the current matter.

“I hope Commissioner Emblemson is going to be alright,” Wakulla said. “I'm sure they'll find him. The commissioner is a very resourceful man,” said Cursor, “he’ll find his way home.” “Do you think there is anything we can do?” Heartin asked. Cursor felt helpless at the moment. “Let’s trust in The Galaxia. The positive energies of the stars will bring him home,” Cursor answered. The three of them reached the locker rooms and Wakulla entered the women's room. “Are you going to watch the obstacle race Cursor?” Heartin asked. “I can not. I'm helping Inast prepare for the joust.” Cursor headed for Team Everforce’s locker room. Heartin called out to him halfway down the hallway. “Wait Cursor,” Heartin yelled, getting both Cursor’s attention and that of a few passing athletes, “Wakulla invited us to the beach later tonight! Will you come with us?” Heartin asked. “Sure. Sure. I'll meet you outside of the stadium after Inast wins,” Cursor said in confirmation before disappearing around the right corner at the end of the hall.

Heartin entered the men's locker room and disrobed. He stepped into the locker room shower and turned the handle. The hot water ran down his body and the steam surrounded him. He was the only one in the shower and enjoyed a quiet moment to himself. The commissioner’s disappearance came at quite a surprise, but Heartin tried to calm his thoughts. He thought of Wakulla. Much like the floating image of his ceiling projector in The Dozenth, it felt like Wakulla was there with him in image, essence, and spirit. Wakulla, in her perceived naked image, seemed to float amongst the mist in front of Heartin. Heartin was enthralled. He stretched his neck and rubbed his shoulders with his hands. Heartin constantly had unrestrainable sexual thoughts of Wakulla and her naked spirit occupied the otherwise empty

shower. Wakulla’s oragisail image politely haunted Heartin once again. The steam of the water was like the soft strokes of Wakulla's hands rubbing his body. Heartin’s body was hot from competition and sweat dripped down his body as the water washed it away. Each drip tickled his skin causing a passionate sensation that relaxed his body. It felt like Wakulla was whispering to Heartin through the sound of the showering water. ‘Heartin,” the water said to him, “I love you with all of the stars in Galaxia.” Wakulla hugged him tight through the falling fluids of the shower. The stream acted as her arms and Heartin wrapped his arms around himself to complete the embrace. In his mind Heartin could feel her soft skin, firm breasts and thighs, and flat abdomen pressing against him. He was aroused at the thought. Heartin wanted to kiss the cloud of the surrounding steam and licked his lips slowly. Heartin leaned his head back and allowed the water to beat across his broad, strong, goosebumped chest as he imagined Wakulla kissing him there. As the kiss vibrated through his body's nervous system, Laslur, completely naked, entered the shower room. “What are you doing?” Laslur asked. Heartin quickly turned the handle in front of him and turned off the showers which brought an end to his amorous day dream. “I'm finished,” Heartin said, “It’s all yours.”

Heartin quickly exited the shower room and grabbed a white towel from a stack on a rack that stood by the showers. Heartin put on his underwear, jumpsuit, and Elonium tennis shoes which now had toenail holes in them. Heartin exited the locker room leaving his bag inside and walked the hall towards the room holding the obstacle course track. Heartin entered Grass Field Auditorium A as the competition was beginning. Heartin took a seat in the stands and the starting horn sounded. Wakulla and the

other competitors, including Sophilia, took off down the track towards the rock wall. Sophilia cleared the obstacle quickly, climbing up and down both sides while Wakulla's climb took a bit longer. Climbing wasn't Wakulla's strong suit and neither was the traversing of heights. Wakulla eventually cleared the obstacles as her knees nervously shook. After clearing the rock wall Wakulla approached the netted poles. This obstacle was a better fit of her abilities and she made an impressive push as she danced her way through the complicated ropes of the obstacle. Once through the nets Wakulla took a smooth dive into the pool, gliding through the water with fishy elegance. She exited the pool in fourth place right behind Sophilia, who pumped her arms vigorously to propel her up the track. Wakulla gave a burst of speed and passed both Sophilia and the runner in second place. There was just one homolinian woman, representing The Oglicians, ahead of her. Sophilia was right behind her, now in third place. The homolinian in first place started to tire as they approached the finish line and Wakulla caught up to the woman, the two of them running side by side. The crowd grew excited. Wakulla and the homolinian woman both crossed the finish line seemingly simultaneously and the winner couldn't be determined at first sight. Sophilia crossed the finish line next and then the rest of the competitors came following behind. The glass tablet above replayed the end of the race and the crowd waited in anticipation. Wakulla and her opponent crossed the finish line just one step away from each other. The homolinian woman was first to cross the line. The crowd oohed and awed. The homolinian woman was the winner of one-hundred thousand crispies. The woman shook Wakulla's hand before taking the podium. Wakulla, flustered, sped off to the women's locker room. Heartin watched Wakulla storm off before exiting through the stands.

Downtown Solareen was busy with citizens. Thousands of enhanced humans walked the streets going from shop to shop. At the northern end of downtown sat a five story grey Pollydroop office building surrounded by a metal gate. This is the Gegsin laboratory. The building was filled with offices and had a large main laboratory at its center. One office took up the entirety of the fifth floor. This is the office where Gegsin developed his performance enhancement formula. The room contained a large black Pollydroop desk, two chairs, a glass tablet of ten enures, and a large shelf of six enures, that held a number of glass containers filled with various liquids. Gegsin stood behind his desk. Fazor stood in the center of the black walled office on the hard white Pollydroop floor. Beside him, the body of a maroon wooloxicorn laid on the ground with its tongue sticking out of its mouth. “I’ll send you your forty-thousand crispies and you can be on your way,” Professor Gegsin said as he walked towards the large glass tablet. Fazor raised a hand. “Nope. Cash. No records,” Fazor said and Gegsin stopped in his tracks. “Very well,” Gegsin responded and went back to the desk. Gegsin stepped behind the desk and tapped his finger on its edge. A drawer in the desk opened and Gegsin pulled out a bundle of red and blue bills amounting to forty-thousand crispies. Gegsin pulled a money bag from out of the drawer and put the money inside it before zipping it closed. “Where's your crew?” Gegsin asked as he approached Fazor with the bag of cash in hand. “At the tournament, probably losing. Rascals,” Fazor answered as he took the bag from Gegsin. “The results are irrelevant. Your team has made a tremendous contribution to the scientific community. The blood of this rare wooloxicorn will improve my enhancement solution considerably,” Gegsin explained in a sinister tone. “And you'll be

providing us with your formula upon its completion, correct?” Fazor asked. “Precisely. Then you and your team will be an unstoppable force,” Gegsin promised as he made his way back behind his desk. Gegsin tapped another spot on his desk and another drawer opened. “A drink?” Gegsin offered as he pulled a vile of yellow liquid and two glasses from the drawer. Fazor stepped to the desk with the sack of money in one hand. Gegsin filled the two glasses with yellow liquid from the vial before he offered one of the glasses to Fazor. Fazor took the vial. Both he and Gegsin lifted their glasses into the air. “To evolution,” Gegsin said. “To evolution,” Fazor repeated. They lifted their cups into the air then swallowed the contents of their glasses.

Wakulla showered and dressed in the women's locker room. She entered the hallway outside of the locker room with her gym bag over her shoulder. Heartin was awaiting her arrival as he stood by the men's locker room with his gym bag which now also held his trophy and glass plate check. “You're amazing,” Heartin said as Wakulla approached. “I don't feel that way right now,” Wakulla answered. “You should. Truly marvelous effort. You'll be dazzling audiences across the Galaxia in no time,” Heartin assured her and the two of them exited The Combat Stadium through the competitors' entrance to the building. As Heartin and Wakulla walked out of the building they took notice of the large holographic image that lit up the outer wall of the stadium. Elonium’s image remained but Heartin's image now had a slight difference. Heartin was now smiling, holding his Pollydroop trophy in one hand and his gold plate check in the other. Laslur’s image was no longer there at all. “Whoa,” Wakulla said as she marvelled at the image. Heartin didn't respond. Wakulla gave Heartin a light punch on the chin. “Nice chin there dude,” she said as Heartin

rubbed his chin. “Yes, I am a dashing Reeptilorm, aren't I?” Heartin answered. Wakulla shrugged. “Right, a Reeptilorm,” she answered. Cursor stepped out of the building and looked at the holographic image. “Who is that?” Cursor joked and the three of them made their way through the parking lot and to the field that led to the Solareenian beach.

CHAPTER 11

Night fell and covered the sky in a black and blue sheet with sparkling fireballs poking through the darkness. There were dozens of colorful umbrellas and beach chairs on the beach. Twenty of the beach goers surrounded a beach bar with a canopy. Laslur stood near the bar with a few beach partiers. The beach bar was ‘glow-in-the dark’ one could say. Its structure was made out of cream colored Pollydroop that lit up neon green in the dark. Heartin, Cursor and Wakulla enter the beach at a point about a half mile away from the beach bar. Cursor began walking ahead of Heartin and Wakulla.

“I'll meet the two of you there,” Cursor said as he hurried his pace which gave Heartin and Wakulla a moment alone. Heartin and Wakulla strolled the beach and looked out at glistening waters that reflected the night sky. “It's so nice tonight,” Wakulla said, “ Let's take a picture.” Wakulla pulled her pocket tablet out of her pocket and the two of them shared a hug as Wakulla used her thumb to press the screen of the pocket tablet, aiming it at them both, and snapped a holographic photo of the two of them. Wakulla put her phone in her gym bag and they continued to walk towards the beach bar. “You should get the newest pocket tablet with your earnings. Then we could talk more,” Wakulla suggested.

“I agree. I want to record some moments behind the scenes of The AME Tournament so I can show my parents,”

“Excellent, they're going to be excited when they hear the results of the race. Where are they now?”

“Somewhere shipping around the darkest corners of the galaxy searching for moon rocks and bacterial creatures and such.”

“Right, they're astro-archaeologists correct?”

“Yes, they're the ones who discovered the fossil rock that held the bones of the raptor from which I was designed.”

Heartin’s parents created him in a laboratory by combining their DNA with that of a raptor and injecting the genetic concoction into a large artificial egg. A year later Heartin hatched from the incubated egg and his life began.

“They've been on their last expedition for the last decade,” Heartin continued. Enhanced humans had an extended life expectancy which surpassed that of the average human due to efforts that nearly perfected the infusion process. Enhanced humans usually lived twice as long as their average human counterparts. Heartin was already forty years old and had the mind of someone older while his physical appearance resembled that of much younger humans without any enhancements. Wintin and Surge were in their eighties and Wakulla was thirty-nine years of age. After Heartin’s primary schooling, Wintin and Surge left on their spaceship to begin their expedition while Heartin went to work in a local market and Wakulla traveled the world with her parents before Heartin and Wakulla entered The AME Tournament. Heartin failed to qualify the previous year while Wakulla won two events. Wakulla convinced Heartin to try again,

which led to his stumble at the finish line of the obstacle course race.

“I'm sure you miss them at times. Don't you?” Wakulla asked. “Constantly, but they help a lot of people with what they do. I wouldn't have been created if they weren't explorers,” Heartin answered. “Are you going to leave one day?” Wakulla asked, “Go out far on a spaceship after your parents.”

“No, I don't think I'll ever go that far.”

“Why not?”

“I like it here. There's nothing out there, but space dust and space rocks anyway. My parents should be back in a few years.”

“And they'll finally get to see you race.”

“See us race,” Heartin responded, “The both of us. Before you leave and travel the world to dance in pools, entertaining crowds of people as a prize athlete. You are planning to leave and travel aren't you?”

“Yes, hopefully I'll earn an Athlete certification this year. I just need to win one more competition.”

“You will. Everyone knows you will be a great athlete one day.”

“Then what do you mean ‘both of us'? Your parents aren't coming back for a few years?”

“I just mean, you know, what if you don't? You did come in second place.”

“Wow, that hurts,” Wakulla answered, “I could beat you in a race.” “You think?” Heartin asked, “Let's see.” Heartin gestured to the water. “The first one of us to grab a puffer horse wins,” he said. “You’re on,” Wakulla said in agreement.

The two of them set down their bags and kicked off their shoes. Heartin and Wakulla ran into the waters of the beach and searched the shallow waters. Puffer-horses are small seahorses with soft spikes that protrude out from the bodies that heavily inhabited the shore of the beach. Heartin and Wakulla reach down into the waters in search of puffer-horses to catch. Wakulla moved her hands around before pulling a puffer-horse out of the water. Wakulla held the cute little creature above her head. “I got one!” she said as she gave the puffer fish a light squeeze causing the head of the animal to inflate. Heartin slapped the water in defeat. “You win,” Heartin said. “What's my prize?” Wakulla asked. Heartin thought for a moment before asking, “What would you like? Winner’s choice.” Wakulla carefully contemplated her answer. “Make me a promise. No matter how far into the galaxy we go, we'll always remain friends.” “Deal,” Heartin quickly responded. The two of them frolicked around using their hands to splash each other with the cool seawater.

Cursor, who was one-hundred and fourteen years old, was standing in a crowd of much shorter people at a beach table near the glowing bar. Giants had an extremely long life span which usually lasted for around two-hundred years which means Cursor was probably just halfway through his humongous life. Cursor

held a large, one enure tall, glass goblet, filled with wild berry beer. Wavy pool tunes played from a speaker behind the bar and several of the beach goers danced to the best. Sitting on opposite ends of the table were Laslur and Tunton engaging in a friendly arm wrestling competition. Laslur and Tunton locked hands, each with one of their elbows on the table, and jostled for position. The two of them were to push the palm of the other's hand with all of their might. Whichever of the two had their hand pushed all the way down to the table would be declared the loser. Laslur and Tunton’s hands were locked at their starting positions for a moment as they both pushed with equal force, but Laslur quickly weakened. His hand moved closer and closer to the table before Tunton gave a final push which brought Laslur’s hand all the way down to the table. The crowd surrounding the table, including Cursor, gave a little cheer. “Who’s next?” Tunton asked, “C’mon Cursor. Have a try.” Cursor lifted his goblet to his mouth and swallowed all of its contents. Cursor set the goblet down on the ground and bent down low in front of the table. Cursor stuck out his index finger and set his knuckles down on the table. Tunton grabbed the index finger with his hand. The contest began and they both began to push.

Tunton was making incredible progress at first until Cursor gave a hard push which sent Tunton's hand slamming into the table. Cursor was victorious. The crowd cheered. Cursor stood and celebrated. “Ha, you owe me a wild berry beer,” Cursor said as he pointed at Tunton. When Cursor pointed his finger in the air the crowd gasped. Cursor confusedly looked down at his index finger. It was dislocated and the tip was bent all the way backwards. “Aaaaaaaaah!” Cursor screamed as the pain kicked in. Tunton sprang from his seat. “Here, let me help,” Tunton said.

Cursor bent down low and stuck out his dislocated finger. Tunton grabbed the finger and quickly snapped it back into place. The finger made a large popping noise. “Aw!” Cursor screamed as he stood, waving his hand around, “Make it two wild berry beers! On the double!” Tunton snickered and headed for the bar. Laslur giggled for a moment and walked away from the table. Laslur looked down the beach and could see Heartin and Wakulla playing in the water. Laslur wasn't happy at the sight and quickly made his way down the beach unbeknownst to Heartin and Wakulla. Heartin and Wakulla stop frolicking and walked back up the shore to their bags and shoes. They grabbed their items and began to walk down the beach again. “Rematch tomorrow,” Heartin suggested, “And I choose the prize.” “Only if you win,” Wakulla answered. “We could go again. The arcade is right up the beach.” “That sounds fun, but what about Cursor? And Laslur is probably waiting for me,” Wakulla pointed out. “Cursor will be fine. And the arcade isn't far. It won't take very long. We can play a few games and then go to the beach,” Heartin suggested. “Okay, but let's make it quick,” Wakulla answered. The two of them turned in the opposite direction and headed down the beach towards the arcade. The Wave Room, an arcade filled with extreme games, lit up one portion of Solareen Beach. The arcade was a long one story building with holographic images of games and prices flashing on the walls.

Heartin and Wakulla made their way from the beach to the sandy path surrounded by beach bushes that led to the arcade. They walked along the path and a pink seagull flew in between them. Heartin and Wakulla dodged the courageous animals and enter the arcade.

The main floor of The Wave Room was full of families happily wandering from game room to game room. The center of the main floor housed one hundred and forty glass arcade games that displayed holographic images. There was a Pollydroop desk with an attendant standing behind it. Heartin and Wakulla found their way to a glass arcade machine with two glass guns attached to its front. Heartin and Wakulla each grabbed a glass gun and aimed it at the screen. Heartin tapped the screen and the holographic imaging screen displayed a number of space-rocks floating in Galaxia. The rocks floated around an image of the words ‘SPACE BLASTEROIDS”. The words disappeared and the time limit began. Heartin and Wakulla aimed their glass guns at the screen. They pulled the triggers and tried to shoot the floating space-rocks which exploded if you made a shot. The space rocks flew all around the screen rapidly changing in direction. Heartin and Wakulla jostled for position as they scored, bumping into each other all the while.

Blast! Boom! Bang! Bow! The rocks explode into a thousand pieces across the screen. A digital scoreboard displayed the results of the match high on a sign that sat above the glass machine. Heartin's score, seventeen and Wakulla’s score, twenty-seven, appeared on the scoreboard. Wakulla raised a hand victoriously and the two of them placed the guns back on the machine. Heartin and Wakulla searched for another game to play. Laslur entered the arcade as they were about to begin a hooped game, with a glowing ball that you shoot into the hoop, and interceded himself into the impromptu date. “Wakulla,” said Laslur, "you were supposed to meet me at the beach. What happened? I was worried. Did you guys get attacked by another monster or something.?” Wakulla placed her ball back on the machine of the

hooped game and turned to face Laslur. “I know. We just got a little…distracted,” Wakulla answered. “Well hurry up, let's go. They're about to do the limbo,” Laslur suggested. “Just a minute. Heartin and I were about to play a game of hoops.”

“There are games down at the beach,” said Laslur, “you and I can kick Heartin's butt down at the beach. How's that Heartin? You down for a good old-fashioned butt kicking at the beach? You can choose whatever game you like: limbo, skim the wave, arm wrestling, river dancing competition, a tiki torch race, whatever you like,” Laslur said, challenging Heartin to competition. “Well if I had a choice I'd rather get my butt kicked here at the arcade. How about you and I have a game of gravity hockey?”

“Ooh, that sounds fun," said Wakulla, “The winners have to buy everyone wild-berry beers. No, Wakulla you should sit this one out. Let me and Heartin have a little friendly athletic sparring if you will.” “If you must,” Wakulla said, "but what is the prize? Me and Tim have been stipulating our competitions.” Heartin and the Laslur looked at each other for a moment. “Prize? There is no prize, just bragging rights," Laslur answered, looking for redemption from his earlier loss today in the treasure hunt swimming race. Laslur could feel the heart of the leopard and leech that lived inside of him pounding as he nervously swam his way halfway down the swimming pool and got himself caught in a bushel of seaweed. The obstacle course race and jousting made better suits of Laslur's genetic advantages. “That sounds best to me,” Heartin responded. “Well, let's give it a go,” said Laslur and the two of them made their way to the No Gravity Hockey Room of The Wave Room Arcade. The inside of the room was a large air hockey table the size of a normal hockey ring.

Laslur and Heartin prepared themselves with hockey shoulder pads, hockey helmets, hockey knee pads, and circular neon-green boards on which they were to stand. Wakulla found her way behind the tinted glass window that covered the viewing room of the gravity arcade. The game was a non-contact sport. The two players were supposed to stand on top of their circular boards and float over the jets of the air hockey field. The competitors then use their respective hockey sticks to hit a glowing puck into their opponent's goal at either end of the air hockey field. If a player successfully got their puck into their opponent's goal they would be awarded one point. The players were allowed to push their opponents off of their boards, however one had to be standing on top of their board when shooting the puck into the goal for the point to count towards their score. There was to be no punches thrown and no poking in the eyes. The player with the most points at the end of the time limit is considered the winner. This contest would only last for a minute and a half.

Heartin and Laslur stepped onto their boards and slid onto the air hockey field awaiting the beginning of the competition. The sound of a horn blared as the glowing hockey-puck fell from its position magnetized to the ceiling and fell to a floating stop over a jet shooting wind out of the hockey field floor. Laslur and Heartin descended upon the puck which floated from side to side making it difficult to get a good swing at it. Heartin was the first to take a swing but missed. Laslur swung and connected sending the puck went flying towards Heartin’s goal. Heartin and Laslur went in pursuit of the puck. Heartin reached it first and smacked the puck back to the other side. Heartin remained floating in place while

Laslur found his way to the position of the puck which had missed the goal. It was now floating in the right corner of the ring. Laslur approached the puck and dribbled it, using his hockey stick, over to the other side of the ring where Heartin awaited his approach. Laslur allowed the puck to float out in front of him for a moment. He swung his hockey stick from side to side, collected himself and then made a powerful swing which connected with the puck and sent it flying at a speed of two hundred miles per hour towards Heartin’s goal. Heartin, who was floating not far from his own goal, reached out his gloved hand and caught the puck in his left palm. Heartin then tossed the puck in front of him and took a powerful swing at Laslur's goal. Laslur steadily floated his way back to the other side of the air hockey field, but the puck went straight in before he could defend his goal. The floor of the air hockey field, which was a galactic purple and black, covered in sparkling stars, lit up to a green glow when Heartin's puck made its way through the neon green goal, signifying a point that was in Heartin's favor. The puck fell down a shaft at the bottom of the goal and made its way through a pipeline system that went through the wall of the air hockey field, up to its ceiling, and slid into starting position against the magnetized ceiling. The horn sounded again and the puck fell to the center of the air hockey field. This time Laslur remained at his starting position near his goal, giving Heartin the first shot. Heartin raced to the middle of the air hockey field and swung his hockey stick with all of his might. He connected with the puck and it went flying towards the goal at a speed of one-hundred and eighty miles per hour. Laslur easily caught the puck in his right hand and tossed it in front of him while using his left hand to swing his hockey stick. He connected and the puck went floating to the middle of the ring where Laslur then floated and softly hit the puck once again. The

puck floated forward for a few yards as Laslur floated forward and swung his hockey stick back to a position behind his head in his approach of the puck.

Laslur gave a powerful swing which Heartin tried to defend by floating to his left and stretching out both of his arms with his stick in hand. The puck narrowly missed Heartin’s hockey stick and went flying into Heartin's goal. The floor lit up. A point for Laslur. They were now a minute into this round and the next point surely would be the deciding one.

The puck went through the shaft of the goal, back up to the ceiling, slid into place, and fell once again. This time both Laslur and Heartin went in pursuit of the puck at the center of the air hockey field. The puck floated over a jet in the floor and was pushed back up towards the ceiling. As Laslur and Heartin neared the puck, they used their arms and legs to push and propel themselves up towards the puck above. Laslur gave Heartin a push that almost knocked him off of his board and was the first to come in contact with the puck by swinging his stick. Laslur sent the puck flying towards Heartin's goal. Heartin changed directions and headed towards his goal where the puck came to a floating stop, having been pushed by a jet that sent its trajectory upwards. Once again, Heartin floated his way under the puck and waited there for a moment, just floating around. “What are you waiting for, little reeper-face? Come on, take a shot. Let's get this over with. There isn't much time,” Laslur said. Heartin was aware. He was waiting for the time limit to approach. Laslur made a quick reaction to Heartin’s strategy and pushed himself forward in pursuit of Heartin and the puck.

As Laslur approached, Heartin swung his stick and came in contact with the puck which sent the puck flying into the right wall of the air hockey field where Wakulla watched from behind the tinted glass wall. The puck smacked the wall at a point in the glass right in front of Wakulla's face. The smacking noise of the puck surprised Wakulla as she excitedly watched the competition and awaited the oncoming end of the match.

The puck bounced off of the tinted glass as Laslur floated his way towards the wall in pursuit. The bounce sent the puck flying over Laslur's head back to where Heartin waited for the rebound. Once the puck found its way back to Heartin he had a free shot at the goal with Laslur lagging behind. This was his chance. Heartin swung his hockey stick with his powerful arms and the puck went flying directly into Laslur’s goal. The floor lit up once again. The time limit ran out with the sound of a horn. Heartin was the winner. Wakulla cheered from her position behind the glass tinted wall.

“Rematch!” Laslur demanded, wanting another chance at beating Heartin. “I'm kinda beat man. My body's been overexerting itself lately. Let's play again some other time,” Heartin responded, which infuriated Laslur. “Not some other time! Now! Let's have a rematch now,” Laslur yelled. “Laslur!” Wakulla screamed, having made her way from the viewing room to the edge of the air-hockey field. “That's enough. Heartin and I are both tired. Come on Heartin. Let's go,” Wakulla said punctually. Heartin tried to push himself towards the edge of the air hockey field, but Laslur got in his way and gave him a push which sent Heartin flying backwards off of his board and floating over the air hockey field where he came to a floating stop near one of the goals.

Heartin's compulsory adrenergic reaction took over his body and he quickly turned into his full reeptilorm form. The aggression caused by the reaction would usually be useful in a self-defense situation or when one is put in immediate danger, however, at the moment, the powerful jets below were a problem of balance and equilibrium for Heartin in his reeptilorm form. Heartin swung his arms and legs around feverously which caused him to spin up, down, and all around, as he floated through the air in pursuit of a return push. Laslur cockily and gracefully maneuvered himself around Heartin’s incoming lunge, which sent Heartin flying and spinning into the glass tinted wall at the right side of the air hockey field. Heartin bounced off of the wall much like the puck that he knocked into Laslur’s goal just moments ago.

“Heartin!” Wakulla screamed as she jumped from the floor to a position high in the air above one of the jets of the air hockey field. Wakulla attempted to float herself towards Heartin, but Laslur reached out and grabbed her. “Wakulla, he'll be fine and we should be at the beach anyway. This whole thing is stupid.” Wakulla quickly pulled her arm away from Laslur. “You're right. It is stupid,” Wakulla answered, “I think it's time that we went home or you can go back to the beach or whatever you want to do.” “Wakulka!” Laslur called after her as she floated away. “I'll see you tomorrow at the arena, Laslur good night,” Wakulla said, interrupting Laslur before he could finish his statement. Wakulla, like an aquatic ballerina, swiftly wafted her way over to Heartin. Heartin floated with his back against the glass tinted wall, a little dazed. Laslur stormed off as Wakulla approached Heartin. “Are you okay?" she asked. Heartin was still trying to shake off the pain he felt from coming in contact with the glass tint wall. After a

moment, the dilation of his eyes reverted while his nails retracted and his skin returned to its normal color. Heartin closed his eyes and shook his head. When he opened them he could think a little more clearly.

“I'm fine,” said Heartin, “ I'll be okay. Maybe coming out tonight wasn't such a good idea.” “I didn't think so either,” Wakulla answered, “That's why I asked you and Cursor to come along. It could have been fun if Laslur wasn't such a leech.” Wakulla floated her way up close to Heartin. “Yeah, why do you hang out with that guy anyway?” Heartin asked as he collected himself and pushed his back off of the wall. “We used to be teammates,” Wakulla answered, “And he used to be an employee at my family's country club. My parents love Laslur. They feel like he's going to be a top certified athlete and the two of us would make a powerful couple, but it seems like we're just not as compatible as they think,” Wakulla explained.

Laslur started his career as a member of The Flyers and switched teams to play for the Oglician Order before winning first place in the previous year's tournament. Laslur lost multiple events as a member of The Flyers and made use of the Oglician’s nefarious tactics to win. “Yeah, I know what you mean,” Heartin answered, “It’s always hard to match mutants with mutants. They're never really the same.” “Exactly,” Wakulla said, "I think it's something about the animal inside of us that just doesn't link up.” “Yeah, I kind of feel like that all of the time,” Heartin said in response, “We seem to get along just fine,” Wakulla responded. “Raptors and salamanders aren't really that different," Heartin answered. “You're right, they're not,” Wakulla said as the two of them stared into each other's eyes.

There was something about Heartin’s competitive spirit and the invigorating results of these competitions that seemed to be drawing Heartin and Wakulla closer together. It was as if a deeper meaning underneath the planetary crust of human consciousness was trying to find its way through the galaxy to the emotional frequency of the two young athletes. The two of them have been friends for years, but having been separated for several years, going to separate boarding school institutions during their youthful education, Heartin and Wakulla never had the opportunity to further their friendly connection. Participation in the aim tournament this year is what brought the two of them back together and they're growing connection, during training and the start of the event, is what led Wakulla after Heartin, into the woods, prompting her to plant that ever so sweet kiss upon his right cheek. Now that they were back together again, neither of them wanted to be separated from the other hemisphere of their mental social preference, choosing to occupy themselves with each other. Their own minds. Every so often, during the day, for whatever reason, Heartin found himself thinking about Wakulla and Wakulla found herself thinking about him. The two of them were falling from the primal instinctual magnetization of love. Heartin wished for a kiss and it seemed like his wish would be granted when Wakulla leaned in towards him, when, suddenly, another group of competing athletes entered the air hockey field room. “Hey, are you guys going to play another game or can we have a run?” One of the competing athletes asked as they grabbed pads and hockey sticks from the cubby holes at the side of the air hockey field. “No, we're finished,” said Wakulla. “Yeah, it's all yours guys," said Heartin. Heartin and Wakulla floated their

way over to the edge of the air hockey field before stepping down onto the floor and exiting the air hockey field room.

CHAPTER 12

Heartin and Wakulla made their way outside of The Wave Room Arcade and walked the sandy path back to the beach. They quickly walked the beach in search of Cursor and the beach bar. Once at the bar they found Cursor laying approximately thirty meters away on the sandy beach with his legs crossed and his arms behind his head. He was drunk from having seventeen wild-berry beers. Laslur was nowhere to be found. Heartin and Wakulla approached Cursor and the giant sat up. “Heartin, Wakulla,” Cursor said drunkenly, "What happened? What in the hell, guys? I mean really. You're going to invite me to the beach and then not even come to the beach. I'm at the beach and you're not at the beach. And my finger. You guys didn't see my finger.” Wakulla and Heartin quickly apologized.

“Sorry, Cursor.”

“Yeah we got a little distracted and went to the arcade. We were going to come right back, but things got a little out of hand I guess you could say,” Heartin said. “No big deal,” said Cursor as he slowly tried to stand. Cursor was a little woozy and only made it halfway up before dropping to his knees. “Can you guys give me a little help?” Cursor asked. Heartin and Wakulla looked at each other. “Us?” Wakulla said with widened eyes. “I'm kidding,” said Cursor. “I’ll be fine. When me and my buddies were making the great crater I drank seventy-eight wild-berry beers in fifteen minutes and I was perfectly alert and still really smart. I am solely responsible for the creation of the entire left wing of the crater.” Cursor pushed himself up to a standing position. “It's been a very long day,” Cursor said, “We should all go and get some rest.” The

group all agreed and began walking their way up the beach. Once they were at the end of the beach, Cursor headed off in one direction towards his mountainous cave dwelling and Tin and Wakulla headed in the other direction towards a quiet part of the city where Wakulla lived. The beach led to one end of the neighborhood of Wakulla's birdhouse which was adjacent to the Solareen Woods where lieth The Dozenth.

“This is where we part ways I guess” said Heartin. “It doesn't have to be,” Wakulla said. “What do you mean?” Heartin asked, raising an eyebrow. “You could come stay with me tonight. My place is a little bit closer than your Dozenth in the woods and it's way easier to get to. You could sleep on the couch and you'll get more rest. Just go home tomorrow.” Neither Heartin nor Wakulla would be participating in tomorrow's competitions of this year's AME Tournament so, as they walked, they agreed that they would be attending the event as spectators and analyzing the performances of their fellow competitors. Heartin smiled inside, but retained a cool collected demeanor as he answered. “Great idea,” Tin said. Wakulla pulled her glass pocket tablet out of her pocket and pressed the button on the screen. The screen lit up and Pollydroop Car, a holographic autonomous vehicle application, lit up the screen. In minutes there was a black and white zebra-striped Pollydroop coupe driving its way down the street that led to the beach where Heartin and Wakulla awaited its approach. The car came to a screeching halt right in front of Heartin and Wakulla. Heartin opened the door and the two of them stepped inside of the vehicle and sat in the backseat. The Pollydroop car smoothly maneuvered its way down the three mile long street that led to a quiet neighborhood with colored ficus and bushes lining the streets. There were homolinian, placosis, and

avercee children running and riding bikes on the sidewalks of the streets. Wakulla's birdhouse was in a more uninhabited part of the suburban neighborhood. It sat upon a hill with green trees surrounding it. Wakulla's yellow and red polka-dotted Pollydroop birdhouse sat on top of a large wooden pillar that was painted yellow to match the rest of the home. The home had a small yard around it and a yellow gate around the yard. There was a red and yellow polka-dotted mailbox at the bottom of the house's pillar that could be reached by opening the matching gate and walking down the sand path which led to an elevator door at the bottom of the pillar. The layout of the birdhouse was similar to that of Heartin's Pollydroop egg-home except Wakulla had a front porch surrounded by a wooden gate that extended out over the pillar. There were two polka-dotted, softly cushioned, Pollydroop chairs sitting on the porch that overlooked the trees surrounding the home. The city streetlights, poking up over the trees, could be seen from the porch, lighting the surrounding city beyond.

The Pollydroop car approached the birdhouse and came to a stop near the entrance of the gate. Heartin and Wakulla exited the vehicle and approached the gate. Heartin grabbed the gate and pulled it open gesturing for Wakulla to step inside. Wakulla stepped through the gate while giving Heartin a smiling nod. Wakulla led Heartin up the sand path to the elevator door at the bottom of the pillar of her birdhouse. Wakulla tapped the screen of her glass tablet phone and the door of the elevator opened revealing a completely wooden elevator inside. Heartin and Wakulla stepped inside of the elevator and it took them up to the main floor of Wakulla’s birdhouse. Once inside of the birdhouse, Wakulla led Heartin to the bathroom so he could shower. Heartin stepped into the bathroom and Wakulla grabbed him a towel from

a cabinet underneath the sink. Wakulla handed Heartin the towel and stepped out of the bathroom, closing the door behind her, leaving it cracked open just a little bit. Heartin stepped into the shower and turned on the water. He again had floating oragisail thoughts of the aquatic goddess that steamed through his mind earlier that day. Heartin quickly showered and turned off the water. He stepped out of the shower onto the glossy hard wooden floor of the bathroom. Heartin reached out for the door of the restroom and pulled it open a little with his head, chest, abdomen, one leg, and one arm in Wakulla's view from the living room. She was returning to the bathroom from her bedroom wearing a set of fluffy lime green cotton ball pajamas that had a crop top and shorts for bottoms. In her hands, she had a grey T-shirt and a pair of sweatpants for Heartin to sleep in. “Here you can sleep in this,” she said. Heartin took the shirt and the sweatpants into his hands and Wakulla walked into the kitchen.

Heartin quickly changed out of his tracksuit and into the shirt and sweatpants before stuffing his own clothes into his gym bag which now sat on the floor beside the couch in the middle of the living room. Heartin then took a seat on the couch in the living room in view of the large glass screen tablet that sat before it. Heartin stared at the blank tablet screen for a moment, picturing Wakulla’s form as a holographic image on the face of the screen. Wakulla’s image was of her in a beautiful white nightgown that waved around from the breeze of some mysterious gust of wind. Wakulla smiled at Heartin and leaned in to kiss him on the lips. Heartin, still sitting on the couch, leaned forward to kiss the image back, puckering his lips and sticking out his chin with his eyes closed. “Heartin, what are you doing?” Wakulla said as she entered the living room from the kitchen with a bowl of pink sugar

covered popcorn. “I was just…” Heartin thought to himself for a moment. “I was just stretching my neck. I got neck cramps, shoulder cramps, back pain, kinks and stuff,” Heartin answered nervously. “Maybe you could use some fresh air,” Wakulla suggested, “We can sit out on the porch for a moment and look at the sky before going to bed.” “I like that idea,” said Heartin anxiously. He sprung up from the couch and followed Wakulla out onto the porch through the red-stained glass door of the living room. Heartin and Wakulla sat down in the polka-dot chairs that sat on the porch and looked out at the beautiful night sky.

It was a mostly quiet night. The sound of large sixteen-wheeler trucks moving freights on the nearby freeway could be heard and the emissions given off from city factories could be seen in the far distance. It was mostly dark out, but the view was lit up by the Pollydroop streetlights that were scattered about the scene. Heartin and Wakulla could feel the cold breezy air of the night brushing against their arms as they sat in the polka-dotted chairs. Wakulla had her bowl of sweet popcorn sitting on her lap. It was mostly quiet for a moment except for the sound of loud mutated crickets that hid in the plants near the homes of the neighborhood and the crunching noise of popcorn being chewed by Wakulla. Wakulla was quickly making her way through the bowl when suddenly she had a thought. “Heartin, you got me thinking yesterday,” Wakulla said, “When we were talking about life's treasures.” “Oh really?” Heartin responded.

“Yes, I even watched the movie you were talking about. What is it? The Pirates and The Lost Treasury.”

“It's called The Pirates and The Illusive Treasure Hunt."

“That’s it. Yeah, it got me thinking.”

“About what?”

“A lot of things. Mostly it made me homesick. I haven't seen my parents in a while. I've been focused on the competition .”

“I know what you mean. I got used to that feeling after having not seen my parents for so long.”

Wakulla didn't know how to respond. She looked down into her bowl of popcorn before she took a few bites.

“But at least I get to transmit with my parents every once in awhile,” Heartin added. “You should go visit your parents. They're not far.”

“That's what I was thinking, but every time I show up at the club, somehow, we eventually end up talking about Laslur and I am so not in the mood,” Wakulla said before she turned to Heartin, “You should come with me.”

“With you, to the country club, to hang out with your parents?”

Heartin didn't want to seem too excited so he waited a moment to answer. “Of course I'll go. I've been thinking about getting a membership at a social club.”

“I can get you more than a membership,” Wakulla answered. “Oh really,” Tin said in response. “And what is that?” “You're just

going to have to show up if you want to find out," Wakulla responded. Wakulla finished the last half of her popcorn with a loud crunch, licked the bowl and then her fingers, before setting the bowl on the porch beside her. The two of them sat in silence for a moment enjoying the sound of the crickets. Heartin badly wanted to kiss Wakulla. He just didn't know what to say or how to approach the situation so he just sat there looking, up, down, and around occasionally making eye contact with her. After a few minutes of awkward sitting, Wakulla broke the silence. "I'm tired," Wakulla said with a corresponding yawn, "We have to get up real early if we want to catch the opening matches tomorrow." Heartin agreed. Wakulla stood and walked towards the red stained glass door. "Wait!" Heartin called out to Wakulla. Wakulla stopped in front of the door. Heartin stood and they shared a nervous look into each other's eyes. "Goodnight," Heartin said. "Goodnight," Wakulla said as if a vow to the eternal marriage of partially conscious lucidity was regurgitated. Heartin leaned in and gave Wakulla a kiss on the cheek. Wakulla smiled and entered the birdhouse. Heartin sat outside, on the porch, alone for a moment trying to calm his mind before he went to sleep. He allowed the rhythm of the cricket's song to rock him into a calmative existence. 'If only I could find this feeling out there on the track' he thought to himself, but what could be the key to controlling this rare bodily condition. Somehow Heartin confusingly felt more powerful and yet out of control when his body transformed into its more Reeptilorm form. How could the scientific minds that were so efficiently developed and concentrated on the scientific analysis and genetic enhancement of the human body have created an intellectual being with contradictory structural elements that disrupt each other in their connection with the nervous system causing an never-ending progression through a series of

emotional phases as a product of that disruption. Thoughts like these constantly found their way to Heartin's mind when he had the opportunity to center himself. Heartin took a couple of deep breaths and stood from the polka-dot chair before making his way inside the yellow and red polka-dotted birdhouse through the red glass stained doors. Heartin closed the doors behind him, stepped inside and across the floor of the living room, past the glass tablet, and laid on the fluffy red couch.

Heartin laid on the couch and used one of the cushions as a pillow he turned to the glass tablet that sat in the middle of the living room floor. "Tablet," Heartin said, "Movie suggestions." The glass tablet displayed a list of movie viewing options for Heartin to pick from. Heartin settled on a title called 'The Disappearing Barnacle'. The Disappearing Barnacle was a movie about a school of mutated expanding barnacles that could grow up to ten times their original size when they ate. The expanding barnacles were captured in a bucket by a giant fisherman. The giant fisherman then took the barnacles to his cavernous home and set them on a table in the kitchen. The giant left the kitchen to prepare himself for his meal. While he was gone the barnacles attempted to swim and then climb their way out of the big bucket, but as each one of the barnacles reached the top another barnacle pulled it back down into the bucket with the rest of them. This cycle continued for a while until one barnacle killed another barnacle that attempted to stop its climb. A different expanding barnacle then killed the murderer and ate them both. This cannibalistic behavior went on for a while until there was just one very large barnacle left in the bucket. The large barnacle had expanded its body to ten times its original length, making it tall enough to crawl its way out of the bucket and onto the kitchen

table. The mutated barnacle then slid its way down the bucket and to the door of the kitchen which it squeezed itself under and around. The giant reentered the kitchen and looked inside the bucket and to his surprise there was not a barnacle inside. The giant confusingly scratched his head, but thought nothing of it. He opened the refrigerator of the kitchen and pulled out a raw swordfish to eat. The Giant gulped down the swordfish with one bite like an hors d'oeuvre on the end of a toothpick. The giant then tossed the remaining sword to the side and went off to his bedroom to slumber. The giant woke up the next day and exited his bedroom. He planned to step outside for a breath of fresh morning air. When the giant stepped out of his cave, there before him, lying on the ground, was the large expanding barnacle that had eaten all of its companions. The barnacle was being cooked by the morning sun. The giant bent down and picked up the barnacle and stuffed it in his mouth. It was a most wonderful breakfast indeed. Heartin stared at the screen and watched the movie for a moment until his eyes got heavy and he fell into a comforting sleep on the fluffy red couch.

Commissioner Emblemson had fallen asleep himself strapped to a soft leather chair in the middle of a cave on Saloreen Mountain. The cave had a number of cavernous hallways that made a confusing maze that led to the middle of the cave. Commissioner Emblemson's hands were tied behind his back and his feet were chained to the floor. Commissioner Emblemson opened his eyes and looked around the empty dark cave. He then looked down at his restraints and struggled to get free. The commissioner looked around the cave for objects that he could reach to break the chains. There was nothing in the cave, but the chair on which he sat and the restraints on his limbs.

Commissioner Emblemson closed his eyes and focused his energy before pulling his feet up, stretching the chains to their fullest extent. The commissioner then stretched his legs into an open split and leaned backwards, rocking the seat of the chair back. The commissioner then pulled his arms forward with all of his might. Snap! The commissioner's right wrist was dislocated and he was able to wiggle that arm out of the restraints. Then the commissioner swung the right arm over his body, twisting his body while his legs were still tightly extended. In a whirling rush, the commissioner twisted and popped the chain holding his left foot. He brought the left foot around and fell to the ground off of the chair, catching himself with the free leg, one chain still attached to his foot and one chain still connecting his arm to the chair. The commissioner then pounded his dislocated wrist against the ground, snapping it back into place. The commissioner then stood up and used his free arm to pull at the chains while leaning back and pushing down on his free leg. The chain that was connected to the chair popped and both of the commissioner's hands were free. The commissioner then grabbed the chain around his ankle and pulled at it until the connecting piece came up out of the ground, pulling a piece of rock up with it.

Commissioner Emblemson fell backwards and landed on the ground as if he had just lost a tug of war. It was a winning loss. The AME Commissioner then made his way out of the room of the cave with the remainder of the chains still hooked to his limbs. Commissioner Emblemson ran through the hallways of the cave from one room to another, but could not find his way out. He ran into one empty hallway to one empty room and then seemingly all the way back again. The commissioner tired and brought his running to a stop for a moment to catch his breath. The hallway

was dark and Emblemson had run out of ideas for escaping. The walls were made of rock and impossible to carve his way through. The commissioner put his back against the wall of the cave and slid down to the floor. He was exhausted.

Suddenly, the commissioner heard a loud booming noise coming from one of the hallways of the cave. Boom! Boom! Emblemson quickly stood and walked in search of the source of the noise. Boom! Boom! The commissioner was getting closer. Commissioner Emblemson turned the corner at the end of the hallway and at its end his kidnapper, Plasmorta, a pink faced man with skinny red translucent tentacles, that lay back on his head in place of hair, was using his green hands to move a giant rock to close the forlying entrance to the cave. The booming noise was coming from outside. The commissioner ran to stop Plasmorta from closing the cave, but couldn't reach the end of the hallway in time. Plasmorta closed the cave and turned around. “Where are you going?” Commissioner Emblemson came to a stop a few feet in front of the man. “You’ve put yourself in a dismal predicament, creature. Let me free and I will beg the authorities to make you a deal,” Commissioner Emblemson warned Plasmorta. “You don't recognize me?” Plasmorta said. “No, I can't say that I do,” Emblemson answered. “How did you get free?” Plasmorta asked, “And all the way through the maze of the cave. Impressive, old man.”

“Who are you?” Chancellor Emblemson asked, nervously awaiting an explanation for his confiscation. “I am Placosirian reincarnated. Here to usher in a new era.” “Ha, Placosirian,” Commissioner Emblemson laughed at his notion, “Your lack of virtue indicates the opposite.” “Your lack of understanding

indicates your ignorance," Plasmorta said in response. Plasmorta, who was still dressed in his silver suit, without his winged jet pack and helmet, stepped forward towards Commissioner Emblemson and Commissioner Emblemson took a step back. The Commissioner was a little bit taller than Plasmorta, but Plasmorta's nonchalant confidence and stocky build was physically intimidating.

"What do you want with me? Shouldn't a god be somewhere materializing complex organisms or something?"

"It's not so much what I want from you, but what I don't," Plasmorta answered and laughed a creepy chuckle. The Commissioner straightened up his body in preparation of a possible attack. Plasmorta stepped forward into a shadow of the cave and momentarily disappeared from the commissioner's vision. In the blink of an eye, Plasmorta reemerged behind Commissioner Emblemson and gave him a quick chop near the top of the neck. Commissioner Emblemson was knocked out cold and Plasmorta caught him in his arms. Plasmorta then dragged the commissioner down the hall and back to the center of the cave.

CHAPTER 13

Fazor, Eneed, Tunton, Sorkin, Scorer and six thousand members of The Oglician Order were on the move in two-hundred black sixteen-wheeler trucks and two black domed tactical vehicles. Fazor pressed a button on the glass dashboard of the truck and the trucks changed from their black appearance to completely invisible. A holographic system covered the trucks in a changing image that camouflaged the vehicles. One-hundred of the trucks were filled with the exotic mutated monsters and beasts that were once locked away in cages by the Oglicians. The other hundred were full of members of the Oglician Order in favor of a hostile revolutionary takeover of The AME Committee and The All Earth Corporation which would essentially make them the controlling party of Solareen. Other Oglicians, like Laslur, weren't in favor of the venture, and others like Leodus, with righteous virtues, were uninformed of the attempted takeover. Fazor, an extremely determined chieftain, with a drive to make enhanced humans the leaders of the world, took to his battle plans with the thousands of nefarious Oglicians who were in agreement with a hostile and unethical revolution to taste insatiable power. The Oglicians drove the trucks through the Solareen streets and released the animals to run amuck.

They drove through the busy streets of Downtown Solareen, with its big Pollydroop Skyscrapers and neighborhoods of family homes, to an edge of The Great Crater, the grey pillar of The Magnet, and the parking lot of The Combat Stadium as they opened the back doors of the trucks. The goblamonkees, porcupawns, bullpers and penguipeckers exited from the trucks with ferocious roars and shrieks and ran into the streets in search

of people to kill and eat. Thirty bullpers and twenty goblamonkees attacked the pillar of The Magnet in an attempt to destroy it so the red building couldn't be reattached upon landing. The creatures beat dents into the Pollydroop and scratched the top edges of the structure. The Pollydroop structure was strong, but the polarity of the pillar's magnetic pull which pulled the building into place took considerable damage. Meanwhile, three-thousand of the Oglicians rode in their trucks in pursuit of The AME Committee Office. The other three thousand were in pursuit of The AllEarth Corporation Factory and Laboratory.

“The commissioner's failure to secure his position and his awful idea for publicizing this year's AME Tournament, provided a perfect time to prepare the release of our animals for a swift takeover of both the AllEarth Corporation and The AME Committee with the favor of public opinion. His disappearance only made the opportunity an unrefusable one,” Fazor said aloud as he drove one of the black trucks, with Tunton, Eneed, Sorkin, and Scorer inside, down a freeway with forty-nine trucks of armed Oglicians soldiers right behind him. Fazor used a glass pocket tablet to call Briles. “Are you at the stadium?” Fazor asked. Briles was to compete in the flying obstacle race today before the takeover would commence. Briles answered from The Oglician Locker Room at the Stadium. “Yes, Fazor,” Briles said, “I’m preparing for my race.” “Good, later tonight, we'll be making our move. Be ready.” Fazor said before he slid his finger across the screen of the pocket tablet and ended the call. A Solareen City Police Department Officer, Mr. Swirlington, a well built older veteran cop with a mustache and a khaki complexion, took notice of the trucks on the move and the freeway, from his squad car parked at the end of the freeway and chose to follow.

Heartin woke up on Wakulla's couch and found her in the kitchen preparing a pan of biscuits. Wakulla stuffed one of the biscuits in Heartin's mouth and he swallowed it, burning his tongue a little bit. “Aw,” Heartin said, “Hot, but good”. Wakulla stuffed down a biscuit. They decided Heartin would go home and the two of them would meet up, once again, at the stadium. Heartin changed his clothes in the bathroom and exited the bird house through the wooden elevator. Wakulla ordered an autonomous car to drive Heartin to the edge of the Solareenian Woods. Heartin quickly made his way through the woods and into The Dozenth. Heartin sat on the couch in front of his glass tablet screen. Heartin looked at the time displayed at the bottom corner of the screen. It read ‘seven thirty-four’. His parents planned a transmission for eight o'clock.

Heartin closed his eyes for a while. After a few minutes the screen lit up with a holographic image of Wintin and Surge. “Galaxia, Heartin,” Wintin said. “Hello Heartin,” Surge greeted her son. “Hey guys,” Heartin responded, “How's the mission going?” “Just fine. We've discovered a few undocumented chemical compounds. Gazed at a couple of constellations. Nothing too exciting.” “Don't lie to him honey,” Surge said, “We've been having issues with the ventilating combustion system and the pressure caused a leak in the processing system. A panel near the back of the ship flew off the rear end causing a breach in the mechanisms. We were able to repair the open panel, but we lost a lot of oil and there is no place to get more or find resources to create a usable substitution. We're going to be stuck in this galaxy, possibly forever. Floating around in space,” Surge informed Heartin. This was a lot to take in at once. His father

interjected. “Heartin, it's nothing to worry about at the moment,” Winton said, “Our trajectory will send us in a direction near a fuel pod eventually. Then we'll get more oil and be able to make it to another transmitting station. We'll talk to you then.” This calmed Heartin. “I won my maze run today,” Heartin informed them, “and one hundred thousand crispies.” “Really!” Surge screamed, “That's great news. I knew you'd do well!” “Great job. You're on your way to being a great Captain like Elonium,” his father chimed in. Heartin then took a moment to describe the attack at the stadium and The Pollydroop Factory. “Sounds like a scary day,” Wintin said. “Stay safe Heartin,” Surge added and they all exchanged a few polite words before ending the transmission.

Heartin entered the restroom where he used the toilet and showered before changing into a blue tribal pattern shirt, matching pants, and a pair of blue and grey Elonium brand tennis shoes. Heartin exited The Dozenth through the elevator and stepped into the woods. Heartin jumped from the big boulders on to the grassy paths that led to the outside of the woods. There were squirrels running through the trees and birds flew by overhead. The morning breeze provided a cooling sensation that balanced the heat of the beaming morning sun. Heartin reached a point in the woods where the trees were thick and close together. The sky was hard to see. The tall trees rustled above and a few leaves fell from their branches. Heartin looked up at the branches of the tree in search of some mutant squirrel or bird. He found nothing, but trees and sunshine. Heartin stepped again with an attentive caution. The trees rustled again. Heartin turned completely around in search of a follower. Plasmorta swooped down from the sky and appeared on the grassy path, having landed behind Heartin. Plasmorta injected Heartin with a syringe

filled with a blue liquid and Heartin lost consciousness. Plasmorta grabbed Heartin, picked him up in his arms, and flew away through the trees.

Heartin awoke chained to a chair in the center of a black cave. There was a large system of glass tablet screens at the center of the cave. Twelve gold Pollydroop lanterns, hung on the walls and lit the black hole. Plasmorta, no longer wearing his flight helmet or jetpack, stood near the center of the cave near the system of screens. “You're awake, good,” Plasmorta said as Heartin blinked his eyes open. “Your apprehension was a disorienting experience I'm sure, but I need your full attention, my brother,” Plasmorta continued . Heartin looked his restraints over and hoped to figure out a plan of escape. “Before you try to escape the chains, an improvisational application, applied as a result of a rapidly changing set of circumstances, I must warn you that you are in the center of a maze of surveilled caves and I will surely catch you before you reach an exit.” “Who are you?” Heartin asked. “There's the question!” Plasmorta excitedly responded. “I’ve been dedicated with a divine moniker. I am Plasmorta. Direct descendant of the original ultimate beings, Placosirian, Reeptilo and Nonon.” Plasmorta wiped his hand across the glass tablet and the holographic image of three prehistoric mystical creatures appeared. The three creatures, Placosirian, a chubby female with blue skin, and a trout head and tail, Reeptilorm, a short, bulky purple reptile with a raptoresque head, scales all over, and a raptor tail and red pterodactyl wings, and Nonon, an muscular orange haired mammal with a panther face and a long red furry lion tail, posed meditatively upon a burning mountain top. “Have you ever heard of these beings, Heartin?” Plasmorta asked. “I have in books,” Heartin answered,

“They're mythological gods with magic powers.” “They're more than myths,” said Plasmorta, “There the origin of mutant life on Earth.” Plasmorta wiped the screen again and the holographic image changed. Meteors came crashing down to an Earth occupied by a number of humans and prehistoric animals. A large meteor crashed into a jungle with wild orangutans, dinosaurs and a river that flowed through, filled with rare species of fish. From the ashes of the meteor arose three perfect beings with genetic structures that absorbed, transfused and emitted natural elements. Placosirian was of the water and air. Reeptilorm was of the earth and darkness. Nonon was of fire and the light. The three beings climbed a nearby mountain, Pridjalum, and created a written origin upon a rock of the mountain. The rock was thus named The Holy Rock. The beings then allowed their elemental energy to release through their mouths and eyes. Placosirian emitted a light blue light, Reeptilorm a black and purple light and Nonon a red light. “These three beings became one with the elements when the Earth suffered from The Meta Meteor showers,” Plasmorta explained. The three beings disintegrated into the form of a blue, black, and red light, and ascended up to the sky above, leaving behind nothing but their tails. Time sped forward and the bones of their tails fossilized. A team of archeologists climbed Pridjalum and uncovered the fossils and the Holy Rock at the mountain top. “Once their bones were discovered they were taken to a lab for examination and classified as the remains of three unidentified prehistoric creatures and the Holy Rock was transcribed to a scroll and locked away,” Plasmorta explained. The archeologists vacated the mountain and the Holy Rock of the mountain broke into pieces and crumbled. “Over the years the Holy Rock was destroyed by the elements, but the scroll survived and the writings were

incorporated into the initial human enhancement trials. The fossils were taken to a laboratory and stored away. Generational separation from the event and a lack of proper documentation and classification led to controversy over the authenticity of Placosirian, Reeptilorm, and Nonon's originative relevance. Their fossils were separated and sent to different labs. One of the fossils containing the bones of Reeptilorm's tail was sent to the AllEarth Corporation and stored in a laboratory to be discovered by your parents as they searched for an animal's DNA to infuse with their own." A fossil, on the glass screen, was stored in a lab and placed into a boxy silver machine. The machine birthed an egg that hatched into a little Reeptilorm. "The other two fossils were taken to labs in India and Australia," Plasmorta said and wiped his hand across the glass screen. The holographic images disappeared. "Those fossils were used to create three enhanced humans, two of which are you and I," Plasmorta explained. "And who is the other?" "I'll set you free and explain," Plasmorta said, "but you have to promise not to run." "I…I promise," Heartin quickly responded. Plasmorta wiped the glass screen again and the chains on Heartin's arms and ankles released themselves automatically and fell to the ground.

Wakulla, wearing a red shirt, red skirt, and red tennis shoes, was waiting outside of The Combat Stadium. She had tried to call Heartin a few times with her pocket tablet, but received no answer. Wakulla waited a moment longer before going off to look for Heartin. Wakulla searched the halls and rooms of The Combat Stadium, but he was nowhere to be found. Wakulla saw Cursor in the hall that led to the Everforce training room.

"Have you seen Heartin?" Wakulla asked.

“I haven't. Is there an issue? He isn't scheduled to compete today.”

“I know, but we agreed to watch the competitions today. I called him a few times, but he didn't answer.”

“He’s probably just asleep. Go check at his Dozenth in the woods. I'm sure he won't be opposed to your intrusion.”

“Right. Good idea,” Wakulla answered and exited The Combat Stadium. Wakulla used her glass pocket tablet to order a yellow Pollydroop car which drove her to the edge of the Solareen Woods. Wakulla exited the vehicle and entered the woods.

Plasmorta escorted Heartin through a string of cavernous mazes into a showroom filled with artifacts that sat on rock pillars scattered about the cavernous room. Thirty small projector lights that lit the lining of the cave room displayed images of Galaxia and the stars shimmered throughout the room. Plasmorta led Heartin to one of the pillars that held a small glowing red rock that held the fossil of Nonon’s tail and emitted an orange incandescence. “This is the fossil from which I was created.” Heartin stepped to the rock and the light shone in his eyes. “I recovered the artifact from an Indian lab upon my uncovering the truth about my origin,” Plasmorta explained.

“My creator, a Professor named Rairden, used my rock as an intrinsic article for good luck, taking the rock fossil with him upon his ship on an exploration to the moon. Rairden lost the rock on the moon and attempted to return to earth without the fossil. The

spaceship malfunctioned and exploded during takeoff proceedings and Rairden was killed in the explosion. The ensuing chemical reaction caused the mutation of a microorganism that swam in a nearby moon puddle and led to an expedited creationary materialization of two supreme mutant creatures. These two creatures grew and eventually made love, with the female conceiving a child. I am that child. And my parents named me Plasmorta Gomegaki. My parents absorbed information through the visitation of various astronauts and explorers who, over the years, gifted them with helpful insight and technology before they died a natural death which left me in gloomy situation as sole consistent occupant of the planet."

Plasmorta led Heartin to another pillar holding another rock. This rock was blue and held Placosirian's tail. It shone bright like the other but the light was gold, making a glowing halo around the rock. "This rock was purchased by a private investor corporation that provided the public with human enhancement opportunities for aspiring parents. A young couple adopted the use of the rock's mutant fossil and a baby girl was born as a product of an artificial insemination. They named her Wakulla," Placosirian informed Heartin. "Wakulla?!" Heartin was shocked. "I was never able to recover the last fossil. It's locked away in The AME Laboratory," Placosirian added.

"What do you mean you *recovered* the fossils? You stole them?"

"I can't steal them. They belong to us. They *are* us," Plasmorta responded, "I attempted to recover your fossil, but these American labs are difficult to break into unnoticed."

“So Wakulla and I are descendants of the gods?”

“Not just descendants,” Plasmorta said, “We are the gods. They live on inside each of us and we will fulfill the initial quest laid out for us in the writings of the holy rock atop the mount of Pridjalum.”

Plasmorta led Heartin to a pillar holding a deteriorating parchment scroll with a wooden handle. “It was written in ancient Pridjalum and later translated into the version that was incorporated into the bylaws of The AME Tournament upon its creation. It says we're brothers and we both must create a child with Wakulla, two supreme beings, a boy and a girl, before we all ascend into eternal light.”

CHAPTER 14

“Wait, hold on right there! What do you mean? Both of us? Creating children with Wakulla? Nonsense,” Heartin said in surprise, “You must have misinterpreted the information or just bumped your head or something.” Heartin was flustered. “Let me show you now,” Plasmorta said and he walked Heartin over to a pillar holding the scroll of the Holy Rock. “I don't want to touch it. It's fragile,” Plasmorta explained, “but look closely.” Plasmorta pointed to a paragraph on the scroll. The written letters on the scroll were in the ancient Pridjalum language and the words had somewhat faded over time. “Reepholonum Fortifus Aspirinert Asai Intrallous,” Plasmorta spoke the words written on the scroll, “It means the combat tournament described in the previous section was under the divine jurisdiction of the gods.”

Heartin followed along as he read further. “Scoornik Jjurrlolinum Passai Derrishana Fie,” Plasmorta spoke on, “The tradition would continue through the direct transference of the mantels to descendent entities. Klossurn Shurredo Intrajja Doonfurtian Spiche. They will multiply, create a new order, and become one with the galaxy. You see, Heartin, this has been destined for us. You, me, and Wakulla.” “And why have I never heard of this prophetic conception?” Heartin questioned. “The scroll was updated and censored upon translation to current languages, removing what people thought of as esoteric gibberish, but one passage remains. The last one.” Plasmorta said as he pointed to the bottom of the scroll.

“Ravinnolk Ajatteann Ashfulsh YoladhuHeartin Kimoerscusc Xanin Bittdresash Oohut. It means ‘may the gods reside over the games now and until the end of the galaxy.”

Heartin looked closely at the passage which was only one half visible. “I suppose maybe that could be what it says, but who says this scroll means anything. The AME Committee handles the regulatory restrictions of the games and the AllEarth Corporation heads mediation between political alliances.”

“That is the problem,” Plasmorta interjected, “We are the rightful empowered monarchs of the mutant community and must take the members of The AME Committee on as our army and set a new social order. You've gained the popularity of the people which will aid in negotiating a smooth transference of power.”

Heartin stared at the scroll for a moment. ‘Could it be true?’ Heartin thought. “You don't believe me, do you?” Plasmorta asked. “I'm not sure,” Heartin responded. “Come, look at this,” Plasmorta said as he walked with Heartin to one last pillar. On top of this pillar sat a small piece of a glowing gold, blue and white rock. “This is a piece of Pridjalum rock used in the first Crater Ball Race,” Plasmorta explained. The Crater Ball Race was a competition where a ball carrier ran a piece of rock to the center of the crater and back to the top of the crater again. “Desiife Molderni Arour. It means ‘May I be transformed?’ It is a prayer to the galaxy. Those were the words our ancestors spoke as they transformed into pure energy. Say it. Say the words.” Plasmorta pointed to the scroll still sitting on the pillar. Heartin approached the pillar and squinted trying to read the words. “Desiifrek Monster Ar-,” Heartin said, but Plasmorta interrupted. “Desiife Molderni

Arour," Plasmorta said. "Desiife Molderni Arour," Heartin repeated the words and undertook a transformation unlike any other. His eyes blackened, his red exoskeleton protruded, his skin turned purple, his nails poked out, he grew an enure, wings sprouted from his back, he grew a raptoresque tail, he breathed a puff of smoke, and then finally a large burst of flames. Heartin was in his full reeptilorm form. The words were the key to unlocking Heartin's true powers. The fire ceased to flow from his mouth and Heartin coughed heavily. He bent down on one knee and clutched his chest as he breathed deep breaths. The transformation was disorienting. "Calm yourself," Plasmorta said as he bent down low next to Heartin, "Transforming has drained your energy. It will be difficult to remain in this form," Plasmorta explained. The effects of Heartin's transformation began to reverse. "We're not like our ancestors Heartin," he continued , "We're mutants with human genetic components. You'll have to train your mind and body to remain in your full reeptilorm form." And with that, Heartin was back to his usual physical appearance.

Heartin looked down at the ground on his hands and knees. "If you trust me we can take back control of what already belongs to us. And Wakulla will be ours." "That's the part that's a little…deterring," Heartin said, "I haven't really planned out the whole kid thing yet." Heartin tried to stand, but he couldn't. His body was exhausted. "Don't stand," Plasmorta said, "Due to an internal alliance to the fulfillment of my purpose, I, unfortunately, must insist that you and Wakulla cooperate. I thought she would be more open to the idea if you were in compliance. I've been watching you as of late. The cosmos has seemed to bring the both of you together as I grew on the moon." Heartin slowly picked himself up off of the ground, resting his hands on his

knees. He was sweating profusely. “Now *that* I can believe,” Heartin responded, “but I'll have to think it over.” “You'll have to think about it now. The Oglicians have made this a timely matter.” “Well if I can't have time to decide,” Heartin began, pausing for a moment to think “then I refuse. I'll learn to control myself on my own. Just take me back home.” “I can't do that, Heartin,” Plasmorta said as he pulled a glass tablet from his pocket. Plasmorta wiped the screen and a dart syringe filled with a sedative shot from the wall and Plasmorta stepped to the side as the dart whizzed over his right shoulder and struck Heartin in the neck. The contents of the syringe emptied themselves into Heartin’s circulatory system and knocked him unconscious. Heartin fell to the ground and his vision went black.

The Magnet was floating over a suburban part of the city. Draper, wearing a pink dress and white sneakers, and Stitcher, who wore a silk short-sleeved blue button shirt and matching pants and sneakers, were in a gold game room full of Pollydroop tables that held thirty holographic blue and white chess boards. They sat at a table and studied the pieces of the chess board in front of them. The chess pieces were red and blue translucent wild animal figures. Draper had just moved a red tiger to a blue square on the board when Pless frantically entered the room and approached the table. “Come quick,” Pless said, “The city is under attack!” Draper and Stitcher stood from the table and they all quickly exited the game room in pursuit of the observation room. Doggle, Hooligan, and Feverlyn were already in the observation room looking out the window at the chaotic scene of wild creatures terrorizing the citizens of Solareen. “What's going on?” Draper said as she approached the window. She could see a woman running on the street fleeing from a huge drooling

porcupawn. The woman tripped on the sidewalk and fell to the ground. The porcupawn pounced on the woman and started to rip off her dress. “We need to land the ship and protect the citizens!” Draper said. “We can't land the ship. There are dozens of creatures destroying the pillar,” Pless informed her. “Then there is only one thing to do,” Stitcher said. “Right, we jump,” Draper said, “Quickly, let's go!” Draper, Hooligan, Feverlyn, Doggle and Stitcher quickly found their way to an emergency evacuation door near the front lounge and cruise workers equipped them with parachutes. The Captains took their parachutes, all except for Stitcher who would use his wings to fly and Draper who would use her powerful blow to land safely. Hooligan turned the metal handle of the emergency exit and the door flew open. The Captains jumped from the floating building. Hooligan, Feverlyn, and Doggle fell towards the ground, deployed their parachutes and came to safe landings in the suburban neighborhood. Stitcher flew off to the grey pillar of The Magnet. Draper fell towards the ground and took in a deep breath which she released before reaching the ground below. The breath created a wind so strong that it slowed her fall to a soft landing on a suburban street. Draper had breathing enhancements in combination with her fishy DNA. The woman under attack was being scratched and bitten by the porcupawn as she struggled to keep on her dress. Draper and Hooligan approached and Hooligan gave the porcupawn a strong kick to the ribs. The porcupawn flew back which freed the woman from its grasps. A few of the porcupawn’s thorns poked Hooligan in the process. “Aw!” Hooligan screamed as he rubbed his shin. The porcupawn recovered from the kick and rushed after the woman again, but Draper stepped in and blew a powerful gust of wind that lifted the porcupawn a foot in the air and sent the creature rolling over and tumbling down the suburban street.

Draper, Hooligan, Doggle, and Feverlyn hurried through the streets looking for people to save. Stitcher reached the grey pillar of The Magnet and took in the situation. The goblamonkees and bullpers were climbing the pillar and causing as much damage as possible. The elevator went under an emergency lockdown and wouldn't open. Stitcher, an incredibly strong man with a powerful punch, went to work, flying in a circle around the pillar and punching animals to the ground below.

Wakulla finally arrived at The Dozenth in the Solareen Woods. Wakulla stepped to the elevator door and knocked. There was no answer. Wakulla licked her palms, making them sticky, and used her hands to crawl up the pillar of The Dozenth. Once she reached the home at the top of the pillar she swung her way over to the stained glass window on its side. Wakulla used her right hand to slide the window open and she jumped through the window into Heartin’s home. She looked around for a moment and searched The Dozenth for signs of Heartin. After finding the rooms empty she made her way into the elevator and exited The Dozenth. Wakulla entered the forest and made it about halfway before there was a rustling in the woods. Plasmorta appeared before Wakulla.

Plasmorta slowly lowered himself onto a ten enure boulder in front of her. “Goddess, divine eternal love of mine. Come with me, please my love,” Plasmorta said as he reached out a hand towards Wakulla. Wakulla took a step back from the boulder. “And who are you supposed to be?” Wakulla asked. “*We* are the leaders of freedom,” Plasmorta answered. Wakulla, immediately, tried to run in the opposite direction. Plasmorta flew after Wakulla as she sped through the forest towards the Dozenth. Plasmorta

flew through the trees in pursuit. Wakulla reached The Dozenth, licked her palms, and once again pulled herself up the pillar to the window and inside the home. Wakulla tried to close the window, Plasmorta flew to the window before she could and Wakulla ran into the living room. “Call Cursor!” Wakulla screamed and the glass screen tablet in the living room lit up with a holographic image of a red phone. Plasmorta stepped into the living room. “What do you want?” Wakulla asked. “There is an ancient tradition that we must uphold,” Plasmorta answered. “Where is Heartin?” Wakulla asked. “I can take you to him,” Plasmorta replied softly. Wakulla looked at the elevator door and made a run for it. Plasmorta flew to the elevator and grabbed Wakulla. Wakulla used her legs to push herself up into the air and she twisted her legs which sent her flipping over, freeing herself from one of Plasmorta’s hands. After landing her flip Wakulla gave Plasmorta a right hook to the chin which connected, but Plasmorta didn't budge. He pulled a syringe from his pocket and tried to inject Wakulla who dodged the first attempt, but was stuck by the second. Wakulla lost consciousness and Plasmorta scooped her up before stepping into the elevator. Plasmorta exited the elevator with Wakulla in his arms and began to fly over the forest. Wakulla, an enhanced woman with a complicated metabolism, woke up in Plasmorta’s arms. The sedative contents of the syringe took little effect. Wakulla screamed and started to struggle. Plasmorta lost grip of Wakulla and she fell to the forest floor coming in contact with a few tree branches along the way. She landed hard, but was able to use her strong arms to protect her body during the landing. Wakulla stood and ran out of the woods towards The Combat Stadium.

Cursor was standing in Team Everforce's training room looking at a large two enure glass tablet that fit in his palm. There was a roaring crowd watching Laslur and a reeptilorm man compete in the joust. Laslur won the joust and one-hundred thousand crispies. The crowd applauded. Briles flew in the air obstacle race which she won, coming in first place. Cursor's palm tablet lit up with the image of a red holographic phone. Wakulla's name was at the bottom of the screen. Suddenly, a porcupawn, bursted through the doors of the Everforce training room. Hundreds of porcupawns, bullpers, penguipeckers, and goblamonkees had invaded the stadium. The crowd erupted into a frenzied terror. The animals ran from hall to hall. A number of Solareen City Police Department officers were in attendance and quickly chased the creatures around with stinger guns in an attempt to subdue the animals. Meanwhile a similar occurrence was taking place throughout the city. The fiendish animals were destroying city property and privately owned homes. The Solareen City Emergency Department responders were dispatched and a game of catch-the-wild-mutated-creature began.

Fazor, Eneed, Sorkin, Tunton, and Scorer were in their invisible tactical truck in pursuit of The AME Committee Building planning to take over the building and use its resources to seize controlling power of the mutant community, essentially winning the Oglician's age old battle with The Flyers. Eneed, Tunton, and Sorkin sat in the back of the truck with two leashed goblamonkees. Professor Gegsin was already inside The AME Committee building in his office. Gegsin stood from the Pollydroop table behind his desk and walked to the stairs that led to the factory floor which was one floor below where he met Ambassador Burtonin, and all twenty-three members of the AME

Committee, who had been handling the functions of the corporation since Commissioner Emblemson’s disappearance. Gegsin planned a meeting with Burtonin and the other AME Committee members with the pretext of discussing Commissioner Emblemson’s disappearance. “So you think you have a way to distract the public from this fiasco with Commissioner Emblemson and bring the commissioner home?” Ambassador Burtonin asked. “Not exactly, but I needed you here because you've been voluntarily handling this year's campaign since Emblemson’s disappearance.” “Well what for?” Ambassador Burtonin asked. “I made a deal with Fazor, the Oglician Chieftain. He and a few members of the Oglician Order are on their way,” Gegsin answered. “Are they almost here? We have a lot to do,” Burtonin said. “Correct! You will have plenty to do once they're here. And now we wait,” Gegsin said.

Heartin woke up with a cloth in his mouth, strapped to a chair, and looked around a dark cavernous room of Plasmorta’s cave. Commissioner Emblemson was hanging upside down from a long chain that was connected to the ceiling. The commissioner swung around until he could see Heartin. “Heartin. You're awake!” Commissioner Emblemson said, “Can you get free?” Heartin struggled in his chair for a moment before extending out his tongue, spitting out the cloth. “I’ll try,” Heartin said, “So Plasmorta was your kidnapper?”

“He was. The Oglician Order planned a hostile takeover of the committee power structure. An attempt that surely would have been thwarted, so they planned to discredit my reputation and ruin the games before having me killed. Plasmorta brought me

here to convince me to comply with his own plan," Commissioner Emblemson explained.

"And you refused?"

"The only honorable decision. When I refused he shot me with a dart and chained me up here to the ceiling."

"He shot me as well after asking me to force Wakulla to have children with us."

"Which you refused?"

"Yup."

"The only honorable decision given the circumstances. Now, can you get free?"

Heartin wiggled around for a moment with no effect before closing his eyes. "Desiife Molderni Arour," Heartin said to himself and his body transformed. He gave a light pull and the chains popped. He was free. He jumped up to get his nails on the chain holding Commissioner Emblemson, but couldn't reach. He attempted to flap his wings and fly up to the commissioner. Heartin floated upward for just a moment, long enough to swing a powerful swipe at the chain and it broke. Heartin reached out his arms and caught Commissioner Emblemson as he fell to the ground and landed on his feet. Heartin set the Commissioner down on the ground and used his nails to set him free of the chains. Heartin helped the commissioner stand. "We need to find a way out of here. Can you scratch through the wall?"

Commissioner Emblemson asked. Heartin didn't answer, but growled loudly, and immediately ran to one of the rock walls of the cave. Heartin began scratching the walls with his nails and the rock started to chip into pieces. Heartin continued to scratch at an incredible speed and worked his way, as a human drill, through the wall of the cave. He scratched for one hundred feet until reaching the end of the wall. Commissioner Emblemson was right behind him watching, impressed. Heartin and the Commissioner looked out of the opening that the hole made. They were at a height of one-thousand feet on the side of a cliff on the backside of the mountainous rock that held the maze of caves. “Can you fly?” Emblemson asked.

“I've never tried.”

“Now’s a good time.”

“I'm not sure,” Heartin responded nervously. Commissioner Emblemson took a couple of steps back and ran at Heartin full speed, tackling him from the hole he created which sent them both falling towards the ground one-thousand feet away. Heartin flapped his mighty wings with all of his might. It seemed as if Heartin and Commissioner Emblemson might come in contact with the ground below, but suddenly, a gust of holy wind blew aside the wall of the cliff and swept Heartin and Commissioner Emblemson up and into the air. Heartin flapped and the two of them flew up into the air. It was difficult, for a moment, at first, but Heartin found his balance and flew off towards The Combat Arena.

CHAPTER 15

Wakulla had managed to outrun Plasmorta and found her way through the parking lot of The Combat Stadium with Plasmorta following close behind. The Flyer and Everforce athletes were working to capture the animals at the stadium. Cursor was picking up bullpers and goblamonkees and stuffing them into his pockets. Magnara jumped in the air and grabbed two penguipeckers by the feet. The penguipeckers carried her for a short distance before Magnara pulled her arms together causing the two flying animals to smack into each other. The penguipeckers fell to the ground and Magnara landed on her feet. Wakulla entered the building and found Cursor as he picked up a bullper and a goblamonkee and smacked their heads together, knocking out both of the animals. Cursor tucked the animals away. “Cursor!” Wakulla yelled frantically. “Wakulla, did you find Heartin?” “No, but some guy in a spacesuit is chasing me,” Wakulla answered. “Not very surprising given the situation. Plasmorta bursted in through the doors of the stadium and saw Wakulla standing by Cursor. Plasmorta looked around at the chaos of the stadium and decided to exit in pursuit of The AME Committee Building.

In the streets of Solareen, the Solareenian emergency responders and certified Captains made their way to points of the city under attack. The porcupawns, goblamonkees, penguipeckers, and bullpers were destroying city property, attacking people in hopes of eating human meals, and defecating and urinating wherever they saw fit. Some of the people of the city screamed, running in terror, while others fought to either subdue and restrain the animals or shoot and kill the more aggressive

creatures while avoiding the lesser threats. Zearcher, exited a market with a bag of groceries in hand to the scene of forty porcupawns, four penguipeckers, and nineteen goblamonkees destroying the vehicles in the market's parking lot. A child, a little girl in a white dress, ran from an approaching goblamonkee. Zearcher dropped his bag of groceries and ran through the parking lot. Zearcher tackled the approaching goblamonkee, stood, and picked up the little girl in his arms. Zearcher ran with the girl to a nearby clothing shop absent of attacking creatures and hid the girl inside before running back to the parking lot to help scared shoppers. Thirty of the vicious animals made their way through the gardens of The Great Crater and approached The Kabrin Hall.

The mutants occupying the gardens, the homolinian children, and exercising humans scattered in fear. Sophilia and Leodus took action. Sophilia flew through the trees scooping up children and taking them to The Kabrin Hall for protection. Leodus, a well trained fighter, took to the ground, tackling, punching and kicking goblamonkees, bullpers, and porcupawns left and right.

Shanina and Vershna were stooped atop the walls of the fountain pools that sat beside the doors of The Kabrin Hall. Thirty bullpers, forty goblamonkees, nine penguipeckers and seventy porcupawns stampeded in approach of the doors. Shanina jumped from the wall of the fountain on the left and landed on the ground below in front of the approaching creatures. Shanina ran forward meeting the animals head on. Shanina touched the animals with an electric touch that momentarily impaired the animals on contact. Vershna, perched at the top of the fountain,

threw her burning balls at the creatures, knocking down and burning a couple of them. Mari, with a black Pollydroop baton in hand, and two AME Committee ambassadors, armed with stinger guns, exited the doors of The Kabrin Hall, to join the resistance and the doors closed behind them. The ambassadors ran down the path stinging various animals while Mari swung his baton, knocking out a number of the animals, but there were simply too many creatures to restrain them all and the majority of them made it to the door of the Kabrin Hall. The doors remained closed and the creatures began beating and scratching at the doors.

The nasty animals seemed to be winning the war waged on the city by the Oglicians, but the arrival of The Solareenian City Coast Guard and the reemergence of two capital figures in the history of the city changed the tide of the fight. The members of the coast guard, in their red and gold soldier uniforms deployed themselves into the Solareen streets in red and gold tactical vehicles. The coast guard members, armed with stinger guns and nets, made their way around the city subduing the creatures that were now running wild.

A long black Pollydroop car with tinted windows arrived at The Combat Stadium. The driver stepped out of the vehicle and opened the back door. Enchantra, a tiny little green woman with brown hair, wearing red framed prescription glasses, a purple dress that was cut to fit under the large turtle shell on her back, with a Captain’s patch on the right breast, and matching heels, stepped out of the car. She had planned to make a surprise appearance during today's competitions. Enchantra entered The Combat Stadium and took in the chaotic scene. She quickly sprang into action. Despite her age, Enchantra was strong and

fast, and used her shell like a powerful battering ram to pound into the porcupawns, knocking the creatures unconscious. Enchantra bounced around the stadium like a ping pong ball, knocking out porcupawns one by one.

In the city, citizens were being terrorized by the porcupawns, bullpers, penguipeckers and goblamonkees that howled and hissed as they grabbed at children and destroyed vehicles. It was a sad sight to see. The families of people ran for protection. One man tripped as he ran and was caught by a goblamonkee and bullper that grabbed the man by both arms and ripped his limbs apart before chewing on pieces of the man's body. Suddenly death was in the air. As the situation worsened, Elonium, the legendary hero, wearing his blue and black scuba suit and blue cape, and a pair of black Elonium sneakers, flew onto the scene. Elonium had lightning speed and the strength of an ox. He had a set of retractable white wings he used to soar into action. Elonium also had a set of vicious teeth he could use to bite through steel. Elonium flew the streets knocking out the animals with powerful punches. Elonium had been off on a galactic tour for the last four years and his reemergence came as a pleasant surprise to the Solareenian citizens.

Back at the stadium, Enchantra brought her bouncing around to a stop after having knocked out the majority of the animals in the stadium. Elonium flew from street to street and brought more than one-hundred creatures to submission. Their efforts gave many humans a chance to escape the terror of the attacking mutant animals.

The Oglicians exited their invisible trucks and entered The AME Committee Building. Sorkin stood watch by the door with a rifle in hand. The Oglicians forced their way into the building, holding the security guards at gunpoint, having caught them by surprise in the intrusion. Officer Swirlington, who drove his squad car, came to a stop about three-hundred feet away from the scene at The AME Committee building.

Fazor, Eneed, Scorer and Tunton bursted into the doors of the main viewing floor of The AME Committee Building, with two leashed goblamonkees, where they found Gegsin, Ambassador Burtonin, and the AME ambassadors. The ambassadors were startled and stepped backed against the glass tablet machines on the viewing floor. “Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, but your services will no longer be needed,” Fazor said as his team scattered about the factory floor. It was a hostile takeover. “You are not in charge here," Ambassador Burtonin said, “This kind of behavior will have you stripped of all certifications and you'll be banned from all AME sponsored proceedings. “You can't ban the commissioner," Fazor said,” And I have a gun." He went on to say as he pulled out a black pistol from his holster. Twenty of the Oglician soldiers ran in the viewing room and held the committee members at gunpoint. “You are not the commissioner,” said Ambassador Burtonin. “I am actually. You see Commissioner Emblemson failed to refresh his memory and reread the written occupational outlines and its AME policy restrictions. The commissioner was to either extend his contract before the end of his term or accept the proceedings of a re-election for the position. This agreement should have been attended to properly and the commissioner should have taken the initial transitional steps to prolonging his authoritative term,” Fazor explained.

“Fazor,” Ambassador Burtonin spoke, “In those stipulatory guidelines it clearly states that in the case that the current commissioner is unable to fulfill his occupational duties or is removed from the position during his term then the designation of the position will temporarily be given to the committee for a unanimous vote decision. We don't have enough committee members here to have a proper vote over the issue. This takes time. You can't just barge in here and say ‘hey, let's vote over who's the ambassador.”

“Yes that is the case, however it goes on to say that a temporary acting commissioner will be appointed to the position and designated by referring to an authoritative list that should be followed from the first person in line down to the bottom, with the first being the vice president of committee operations, and at this current time the vice president happens to be Professor Gegsin.”

Gegsin gave Ambassador Burtonin a wave. “Hey there Burty!” Gegsin said.

“Gegsin, what a pleasure.”

“Good to see you too, old friend. So as operating chief officer of this committee. I say that Fazor and the Oglicians are free to make use of The AllEarth Factory and AME Committee Building for whatever frivolous endeavors they have decided upon, while I will take the opportunity to use the Oglician’s resources to transform the population into a highly evolving species, a kind of which has never been seen before,” Gegsin explained.

“It will never be seen," said a loud voice echoing through the viewing room.

It was Commissioner Emblemson with Heartin at his side. They entered the building after having flown over and passed the shooting Oglicians guarding the entrance.

“Commissioner, you're alive,” Fazor said with a scoff, “It is of no importance. We were going to kill you anyway and besides proper motions in regards to policy restriction have already been taken. You are no longer the commissioner.”

“Fazor, every motion that you have taken has been under a false pretense and thus committed illegally making false use of misconstrued policy regulations and a self-elevated position in the committee can never be accepted by the general public.”

“*I* am the general public,” Fazor answered, “The citizens of Solareen are just like me. We’re animals. We're the real leaders of the world. Our physical constructions are the peak of scientific know-how. We are the ones that are going to be able to take and use the foundational elements laid down and given to us by our ancestors. Once the people see how it is you that let the city fall apart, by disregarding and choosing not to accept the wild instinctual animalistic spirit of the city, they’ll turn on you. Every year we come together to celebrate a group of amateur athletes in search of proper certifications. These athletes participate in a number of games to entertain and uplift the spirits of the community. Why? Just practicing the use of these amazing abilities conceived by the realization and implementation of modern sciences in a divisive manner that compels the everyday

citizen to believe that we should suppress the competing spirit of the enhanced human that lives in us all, that was birthed with the creation of our city and the aim tournament itself, instead of allowing the real heroes the common everyday enhanced human to use their abilities freely without societal restriction, is truly ridiculous. I'm more than a hired puppet for teaching petty tricks. This is about freedom Commissioner Emblemson. I just want us all to be our true selves," Fazor said before adding, "Oh yeah, and I simply want to be in charge."

Officer Swirlington and ten Solareen City Police Department officers entered the building. There were sixty other officers outside the building shooting and subduing Oglician Order members who shot back at them. Sorkin made a run for it as the police arrived and narrowly escaped. The police pointed their guns at the members of The Oglician Order who pointed their guns back.

"Don't move!" Swirlington said as he pointed his gun at Fazor, "Solareen Police Department! What's going on here?" "I can tell you," Plasmorta said, stepping onto the floor of the viewing room, "None of you should truly have a say about what happens with The AME Committee."

"Who in the hell is this guy?" Fazor said, "And why is he talking?" "You're the one who shouldn't be talking," Plasmorta said, "I've been watching you Fazor. As I flew around the city watching you kidnap nearly extinct animals and enjoy your secret meetings with Gegsin, I wept for the constituents of The Oglician Order who are under the control of such ignorance."

Plasmorta stepped forward to meet the tense crowd at the center of the factory floor. His presence seemed to have a magnetic aura that pushed and pulled everyone away, keeping them in a stationary position and its emissions could be felt by all of the meeting constituents.

“You should have all been considering this ancestral dispute with the same attentiveness that has inspired your confrontational efforts. You all owe your lives to Placosirian, Reeptilo, and Nonon and if you take a closer look at the very guidelines from which you are basing the entire foundation of your argument, on either side, you will see that we really owe our lives to the gods literally listed in that very documentation. The holographic images of these original AME Tournament regulations are modified and simplified, but the rhetoric of the original scrolls states clearly Heartin and I are direct descendants of Nonon and Reeptilo and are technically the true owners of The AME Corporation and are also respectively controlling members of the committee,” Plasmorta said before gesturing towards Heartin, “We will uphold the traditions of our spiritual ancestry and unify the enhanced human world. I'm sure the ingenuity of the human mind will persevere and allow a certain portion of the human race born with or without scientific enhancements to survive and they will join us, the strongest of descendants, as we apply our mental fortitude at its highest level, creating not only a better human physically but mentally and ethically as well. Mutant brains operating at an unprecedented efficiency have provided us with the ability to eliminate the ecological and therefore economical problems of the world today. So now we're running into one simple problem that seems to be vexing society as a whole. Some humans are just better than others. Mutant technology has revolutionized the power structure

of human society much in the spirit of the creation of the firearm. There will be a point where humans are so powerful that the gun will be an irrelevant mechanism and concentration on perfecting the use of one's own physical enhancements will be crucial to the survival of each and every individual. The strongest will survive and the bloodlines of the gods will live on through Heartin, myself, and Wakulla."

"Wakulla's not getting freaky with you man. You can't just fly in from outer space and think everyone is going to do whatever you want. I know what the scroll says, but what about everyone else? What about what we think?" Heartin responded.

"That scroll is the reason that you are alive! The reason that you're here today! It's the reason you have the wings on your back! And don't forget the best part. It says that the descendants of these ancestral beings are the next in line to hold the prestigious position of mutant monarchship. Look for yourselves," Plasmorta used one of the laboratory's glass tablets to display the original scrolls that dictated the proceedings that led to the creation of The AME Tournament. "Three extinct mystical creatures were the blueprint for the equation that unlocked the key to enhancing humans and the verbiage of the scroll went as thus" Plasmorta said, "We're royalty! Wakulla, Heartin, and I are gods! The city of Solareen is ours!"

"Plasmorta," Commissioner Emblemson interceded, "The AME Tournament was created with a democratic essence in effort to find a reasonable medium of argumentative deliberation. Your intrinsic interpretation of the fundamental elements of the original agreement agreed upon by our ancestors has been manifested

with the delusional influence of perceived ostracism. Your personal vendetta with the current authority structure and inconsiderate ideals are unbefitting of a leader and I'd say the same to you Fazor.”

“This isn't an argument. It's not a debate. The current records say Gegsin is the acting commissioner and Gegsin listens to me, so I'm in control here,” Fazor said angrily.

“Not exactly,” said Gegsin, “I was going to wait until later to say this, but now is as good a time as any. My enhancement beverage contains a microorganism that's flowing through the blood streams of Fazor, the Oglician Order members in attendance, and all the animals that were given the formula.” Gegsin pulled a glass tablet from his pocket and held it up in the air. Gegsin slid his finger across the screen a few times and one of the goblamonkees standing at Fazor side, grew terribly aggressive. The goblamonkee shook its head furiously as the microorganisms, that were linked to the frequency of Gegsin’s pocket tablet remote control, interacted with the goblamonkee’s brain waves. The goblamonkee went berserk and attacked Fazor who simply shot the animal. “Get the point?” Gegsin asked. “What in the hell Gegsin,” Fazor said angrily, “That wasn't the plan.”

“Actually it was. It just wasn't *your* plan.”

“Do you expect us all to just go along with this foolery? You've got to be joking?”

“It's not a joke,” Gegsin pressed the screen again and its frequency took over Fazor’s body. Fazor pointed his gun at

Commissioner Emblemson and took a shot. Commissioner Emblemson dodged the shot by jumping to his left and landed on the ground. An armed police officer shot at Fazor and hit him in the shoulder. A commotion ensued with Oglicians and the present authorities firing their weapons at each other. Commissioner Emblemson picked himself up off of the ground and he and Heartin headed for an exit. Heartin and the commissioner took a moment to hide behind a glass tablet computer. A few shots hit the computer, cracking the glass in front of them. “C’mon let's get out of here,” Commissioner Emblemson said as he grabbed Heartin by the hand. The two of them ran for the exit as bullets flew by.

Once outside of the factory laboratory Heartin and Commissioner Emblemson ran down a hallway toward the exit. Heartin and Commissioner Emblemson bursted through the exit doors and Heartin grabbed Commissioner Emblemson by both arms, hoisting him up into the air, and flapped his wings. The two of them flew away towards The Combat Stadium.

The struggle in the factory continued for a moment as the opposing sides traded shots. Gegsin continued to use his tablet to control Fazor who stood in one place shooting all around. Fazor was then hit by a bullet to the chest and then another bullet to the abdomen. Fazor fell to the ground. Eneed tackled Gegsin to the ground and he dropped his glass tablet. Gegsin got to his feet and ran through the doors which led outside of the laboratory. “Don't let him get away,” Eneed said, “He can control those microorganisms from any tablet screen.” The other Oglicians vacated the laboratory as they shot back at the police officers who attempted to chase after them. Plasmorta had a few bullets

bounce off of him as he flew out of the factory in pursuit of Heartin and Wakulla.

Heartin and Commissioner Emblemson landed in front of The Combat Stadium and ran inside to the ensuing chaos, passing a few porcupawns along the way. They found Wakulla and Cursor inside. Wakulla kicked a few approaching penguipeckers and they flew backwards, landing on the ground some feet away. Commissioner Emblemson rushed to help people safely out of the stadium. “The two of you should leave before Plasmorta arrives. Quick, go to the Great Crater. Mari will help keep you safe,” Commissioner Emblemson instructed. Heartin had grown tired from flying and his body reverted back to its usual form. He and Wakulla made a quick exit from the stadium. Wakulla used her pocket tablet to order an autonomous cream colored Pollydroop car. The car arrived in under a minute. Heartin opened the door to the vehicle and they got inside. The Pollydroop car carried Heartin and Wakulla to the bridge of the freeway that connected the streets around the factory to the neighborhood of Wakulla's birdhouse.

Plasmorta flew high in the sky after the car. Heartin looked out of the window and saw Plasmorta as he grew closer. “Plasmorta is right behind us,” Heartin said and he started breathing heavily. Heartin held back a shriek as his nails extended. Wakulla grabbed Heartin by the chin and kissed him on the lips. Heartin stopped breathing and looked at Wakulla in her eyes of the earth. “You can beat him, Heartin,” Wakulla said, “Think about the treasure.” Heartin took the advice and closed his eyes for a moment. “Desiife Molderni Arour,” he said to himself. When he opened his eyes he was transformed, having taken on

his full Reeptilorm form. Plasmorta swooped down on top of the car and popped the top. Wakulla screamed. Heartin stood in the seat of the car and looked Plasmorta in the eyes before opening his mouth and shooting a blaze of fire in his direction. Plasmorta dodged the fire before raising his hand and shooting a red laser from his palm. The laser missed Heartin and cut through the floor of the car. The Pollydroop car came to a stop on the freeway. Plasmorta reached out and grabbed Heartin up out of the car with both hands. Heartin stood in front of Plasmorta as he spoke. “You will ascend into the light whether you agree with me or not!” Plasmorta said as he flew straight up in the air with a hold of Heartin. Heartin struggled to get free, but Plasmorta was holding him tight. The two passed the clouds and flew on towards the edge of the atmosphere. It got harder for Heartin to breathe and his body began to revert to usual form. Heartin reached out with his right hand and scratched one of Plasmorta’s jet pack wings, breaking the wing into pieces. Plasmorta’s broken jetpack sent him spiraling out of control and he let go of Heartin. Heartin began to fall to Earth. Plasmorta spun off into a cloud.

Heartin lost consciousness as he fell and it looked as if he would meet his end, but Wakulla took action. She ran for the edge of the bridge and jumped into the water of Solareen River which lay below. It was an incredible dive with a splashing finish. She swam twenty yards below the surface, stopped, and pushed herself back up, torpedoing herself out of the water and into the air. Wakulla’s flight sent her in Heartin’s direction as he fell and she grabbed hold of him on her way up. Wakulla pulled him in tight. The two of them flew upwards for a few meters before reaching the top of their flying trajectory and floated for a moment, spinning with each other in their arms. Then gravity began pulling

them back down again. They went crashing into Solareen River with a splashing dive. Two members of the Solareen Police Department arrived at the edge of the bridge near the Solareen River bank. The police officers, a man and a woman in uniform, approached the edge of the river. Wakulla began swimming underneath the water while Heartin sank downwards. Heartin was still unconscious. Wakulla swam to Heartin and pulled him close to her body. Wakulla swam to the surface with Heartin in her arms.

Suddenly Plasmorta came swooping down towards Wakulla and Heartin. Plasmorta's jet pack could operate without the wings using the sole thruster on the pack. Plasmorta attempted to fly to the surface and scoop Heartin out of the water like a seagull snatching a fish, but before he could reach them Elonium came flying onto the scene from a cloud in the sky. Elonium tackled Plasmorta mid-flight and grabbed him with both arms. Plasmorta and Elonium went flying off into the distance.

Wakulla held Heartin in her arms as they floated at the surface of Solareen River. Heartin was still unconscious. Wakulla shook Heartin in an attempt to wake him. The shake had no effect. Wakulla pulled Heartin to the river bank. An ambulance of The Solareen City Emergency Responder’s Department moved in. An emergency responder, one of the three to arrive on the scene, a red haired middle-aged white woman, tried to resuscitate Heartin, but it unfortunately did not wake him. Wakulla frantically paced back and forth. “C’mon, Heartin, wake up!” Wakulla said before bending down next to Heartin and the emergency responder. Wakulla put her hand on Heartin’s chest and, to her surprise, his chest, along with the skin of her hand, started to glow

a mix of blue and purple light. Heartin's chest began to move as he breathed in. Heartin and Wakulla’s eternal ancestral galactic connection that linked them together and to the smallest atom of the rarest organisms in the most distant edges of space absorbed destiny’s energy and forced themselves into rescuing position in Heartin’s lungs and cognitive systems. Heartin choked on the breath and shook vigorously before coughing up a swallow of water and opening his eyes. Wakulla pulled her hand away. Heartin burped a smoky burp and sat up. Wakulla gave Heartin a kiss on the lips and he shrieked without transforming. “Heartin, you did it,” Wakulla said, “You beat him. I think.”

“Good, but he'll be back. He knows where we live.”

“No, Elonium showed up and I'm sure he'll set him straight. Besides, Cursor warned everyone about a crazy man with a jetpack,” Wakulla said as she helped Heartin to his feet. “Elonium showed up? And I missed it,” Heartin responded as Wakulla’s parents arrived on the scene. Cursor had called them. Wakulla's parents, Marrinian, wearing a white shirt that was tucked into her blue jeans and brown boots, and Durrino, a big burly dark man with low cut facial hair, wearing a white button up shirt, blue blazer, and black boots, who stood half an enure taller than his wife and daughter, exited an ash grey Pollydroop car. They ran to Wakulla and Heartin and Wakulla gave them a big hug. “What is going on?” Marrinian asked. “We’re wondering the same thing,” said the female officer who was standing close by with her partner. She had never seen a chest glow before. Heartin and Wakulla answered as much as they could about the incident before Marrinian and Durrino invited Heartin to come with them for dinner considering the absence of his parents. The four of

them got inside of the autonomous ash grey Pollydroop car and rode away.

CHAPTER 16

The neon gate of The Asteroidium Country Club opened and the grey Pollydroop car, in which Heartin, Wakulla, Marrinian, and Durrino sat and chatted comfortably, drove down a long dirt driveway to the large three story building of the club. The evening sky was darkening and shone a deep dark blue. Wakulla's parents adopted forty enhanced human children that ran around the country club and played games on the large grass field surrounding the country club. Heartin had been to the club a few times before. They strolled down the driveway passing green-leaved trees that lined the quarter mile path to the club. They arrived at the fourteen steps that led to the big three-story white Pollydroop house that had two smaller Pollydroop homes behind it. One home was a red two-story cottage boarding house for mutant orphans and the other house, a two-story blue building with a porch, was filled with bedrooms meant for visiting country club members.

The Asteroidium Country Club was a charity organization run by Marinnian And Durrino. The contributions of the members of the club funded the orphanage and its respective programs and the club provided members with a vacation destination with plenty of activities to participate in. Marinnian and Durrino led Heartin and Wakulla through the main hall of the club. Their bedrooms were upstairs above the path of the main floor which led to a set of sliding red and blue stained glass doors. They stepped out of the doors and down a set up steps which led to a small train track that went from the back of the main house, around the other two houses and then out to the grass field and back again. At the end of the track was a Pollydroop train with cars the shape and color

of various mutated animals. There were seven cars in total. The cars were in the shapes of a goblamonkee, a porcupawn, a bullper, a penguipeckers, a wooloxicorn, a hoglercept, and a shiny gold lynx. Marrinian and Durrino got in the first car, a white wooloxicorn. Heartin and Wakulla sat in the second car, a purple bullper. A group of six children, one reeptilorm, two placosis, and three homolinians filled the remaining seats. Durrino slid his hand across the glass tablet screen that sat on the dashboard of the first car and the train quickly took off down the track. The train sped up the track to the red house and the children exited the train. The train continued past the blue house and turned through the grass field. The grass field had a set of three golf holes that were one-hundred yards apart, with neon flags in the holes, which the train sped by on the way to the outer gate of the country club.

The train slowly slid alongside the gate and the tall trees that stood at its side. The temperature was cool and a breeze occasionally blew. The country club was absent of visitors except for a few golfers on the course and the group of four enjoyed the tranquility of the scene. Heartin and Wakulla looked at each other and smiled. Marrinian turned around to face Heartin and Wakulla. “Beautiful night,” Marrinian said. “The most,” Heartin answered. “I bet you guys are hungry. It's been a long day,” Durrino said over his shoulder. “We’re having solar stew tonight,” Marrinian said, “Do you like solar stew, Heartin?” Solar Stew was a soup stewed with mutated pink cabbage leaves and cuts of beef. “I love it,” Heartin answered as he salivated. “Perfect,” Marrinian responded and turned back around in her seat. The train continued on for a minute and Heartin and Wakulla took the moment to relax. Wakulla put her head on Heartin’s shoulder and the two of them looked out at the trees as they passed. Once the train circled the

property, it went up a part of the grass field and back to the back door of the main house. Marrinian and Durrino led Heartin and Wakulla inside the house and to the dining room. Heartin and Wakulla sat next to each other at the long Pollydroop table, which could seat thirty diners which sat at the center of the dining room. The table had a Pollydroop lamp colored shaped like a flame at the center of the table. There were thirty cream colored Pollydroop plates, thirty cups, knives, and forks of the same color, sitting on the table. Two gold Pollydroop lamps lit both sides of the room. Two murals of blue and foam green ocean scenes hung on the purple wallpapered walls. Marrinian and Durrino exited for a moment and returned with a large kettle of solar stew and a jar of wild-berry juice. Marrinian and Durrino set the items on the table, sat at the table across from Heartin and Wakulla, and the group began its dinner.

Marrinian and Durrino made polite conversation until things got a little tense as they started asking Wakulla about Laslur. “Wakulla, I haven't seen Laslur around?,” she asked, "What's going on with the two of you?” “Laslur's off doing whatever Laslur does. Probably challenging a child to a toy rattling contest,” Wakulla answered. “Don't be that way, Guppy,” Marrinian answered, “You guys are cute together.” “And we’re cute when we are apart,” Wakulla said as she changed the subject and the group finished the dinner speaking of other thoughts.

After dinner Heartin thanked Marrinian and Durrino for the stew and Wakulla walked with him outside to the front steps of the main building. They stood in front of the steps on the front porch. “I think I like this,” Wakulla said. “Like what?” Heartin asked. “Us. Ya know. The universe brought us together because of our

ancestors who are gods or something crazy like that, right? That's what you were saying in the car on the way here.” Wakulla responded. “Yeah, something like that,” Heartin said, “I like us too.” Wakulla stepped forward, put a hand on one of Heartin’s shoulders, leaned in slowly, and gave him a soft succulent sweet kiss on the lips. Unbeknownst to Heartin and Wakulla, ten white stars, high in the sky, brightened and expanded to twice their original size, and a flaming shooting-star shot across the sky. Wakulla put her arms around Heartin’s shoulders and Heartin put his hands on Wakulla's waist where her mighty hips and soft round buttocks met. They continued to kiss while Heartin pulled Wakulla in, holding her tight while her moist lips coolly sent a heart-throbbing jolt pulsing through his veins. Wakulla’s body reacted to the embrace and a shiver went up her spine. Heartin could feel a galactic electricity radiating from within as a small portion of his oragisail dreams came true. He used his hands to feel Wakulla’s tantalizing body and they stood lip-locked as a red Pollydroop car made its way down the driveway. The car stopped near the bottom of the steps. Heartin and Wakulla separated and held hands for a moment. “We’ll see Plasmorta again and settle all of this. And we’ll be together. The two of us,” Heartin said. Heartin let go of Wakulla's hands and walked down the steps before getting into the Pollydroop car which then sped away. Wakulla left the front steps and went inside the front door of the country club. Marrinian, holding the empty kettle she used for the solar stew and Durrino, holding a stack of empty plates, were standing not far from the door. They could see Heartin and Wakulla through the window of the door as they kissed. They looked at Wakulla who looked back at them. They didn't say anything. They smiled and went into the kitchen. Wakulla went upstairs to a bedroom and closed the door behind her.

The Solareen Police Department officers and The Solareen City Emergency Department responders tried to make sense of the animal disaster that shocked the city that day. Injured citizens were taken to local hospitals while the officers collected the bodies of those who were killed in the pandemonium. The death toll was of seven undeserving souls. Hooligan, Doggle, and Feverlyn used their super strength, super speed, and formidable fighting skills to knock bullpers, goblamonkees, and porcupawns unconscious. Draper used her powerful breath to knock penguipeckers out of the sky while Stitcher cleared the animals from their grasps of the grey pillar. The Magnet was then returned to its position on top of the pillar and the Captains returned to their daily duties. Fazor was taken by emergency responders to a local hospital to be treated for his gunshot wounds. After treatment he was arrested and received a trial, for a list of crimes, that included starting a riot, disturbing the peace, trespassing, illegal trading, killing an endangered animal, political corruption, public endangerment and carrying an unauthorized weapon. Fazor's defense argued that his judgement was being affected by Gegsin’s microorganisms which resulted in Fazor receiving a deal on his guilty sentencing. He would serve five years in jail and spend two years on probation. Gegsin escaped the other Oglicians, but was caught and arrested by Officer Swirlington and the Solareen police. The controls of his microorganism were destroyed and he was charged with conspiring to endanger the public and breaking food and drug regulations. Gegsin and Fazor were subsequently expelled from all affiliations with the AME Committee and AllEarth Corporation and banned for life. The rest of Fazor’s crew that entered The AME Committee Building, The AllEarth Corporation Offices and Factory, and those who drove

the mutant animals through the city were charged with lesser crimes and were sentenced to stints of community service. Eneed and Scorer began a strangely toxic relationship after completion of their societal debts. Briles quickly exited The Combat Stadium once the attack began. She met up with Sorkin who was able to escape being arrested at The AME Committee building. The two of them continued their friendship which blossomed into a vibrant love. They planned to leave for Africa as soon as possible. Commissioner Emblemson was allowed to retain his position due to the contractual mishandling being an honest mistake. He would handle the duties of the position until a re-election could be held, a re-election that he would eventually win by a landslide. Plasmorta had a brief struggle with Elonium near Solareen River before he made a shifty escape and returned to his cave where he formulated new plans. The AME Committee postponed the tournament competitions until the stadium could be cleaned and repaired. Cursor went back to his cave and ate the forty-seven creatures he wrangled at the stadium. After the creatures which attacked The Combat Stadium were subdued, Magnara left the stadium in pursuit of rest at her purple raptor ranch, but made sure to tell Cursor to call her. Magnara had a crush on the giant. Laslur exited the stadium quickly after his joust. Laslur, being a part of the Oglician Order, was aware of the ongoing attack beforehand and was promised a position as the tournament’s premier athlete once the Oglicians were in power. Laslur attempted to call Wakulla after the commotion was resolved, but she refused to answer. Enchantra’s reemergence and heroics at the tournament were praised as she was enlisted to be the tournament’s patron of honor. Elonium was invited to be a special guest for his assistance during the commotion. Waste workers and the citizens of Solareen busied themselves with the dreadful

task of cleaning up the city and caging the surviving animals. Heartin and Wakulla spent the next morning watching movies and eating pink popcorn at Wakulla's birdhouse and the evening eating fruit gelatin and watching movies at the Dozenth as The AME Tournament was postponed. After watching “The Pirates and The Returning Treasure”, a sequel to “The Pirates and The Illusive Treasure Hunt” where the pirates fight over the treasure they found in the first film, the two of them left the couch of the living room and entered Heartin’s bedroom. They laid in Heartin’s bed-ish grave and held each other close for a moment before the two of them slowly pulled off each other's clothes, kissed, and then made love. The stars brightened in the evening sky above The Dozenth.

After disengaging themselves, Heartin explained Plasmorta’s takeover plan to Wakulla and instructed her to say the magic words of the scroll. “Desiife Molderni Arour,” Wakulla said. Wakulla immediately transformed and took on the form of a placosis goddess with a long tail and sharp claws. A hard light blue exoskeleton protruded from her joints, covering her neck, arms, back and legs. She had the power to emit a watery mist from her body which propelled her in the air. Now Wakulla really could float. She hovered above the ground and floated around the Dozenth. She could only hold the form for a minute, but a marvelous minute it was. Wakulla was excited at the realization of her true power, but was in disagreement with Plasmorta's opinion about their true purpose. Wakulla was undoubtedly falling in love with Heartin and he with her.

That night Plasmorta climbed through the blue stained glass window of The Dozenth and approached Heartin and Wakulla with

a proposition. While the two of them were opposed to planning their parenthoods, and the rest of their existences that same night, they were persuaded to listen to Plasmorta due to their successful transformations. Plasmorta suggested that they would run the crater-ball race. Plasmorta had become friends with many members of The Oglician Order over the years as he went undercover in the organization and spied on The AME Committee in preparation for his attempted reformation of the enhanced human community. Plasmorta would team up with The Oglician Order and Heartin would join Wakulla, Cursor, The Flyers, and Team Everforce members in favor of allowing Commissioner Emblemson to retain his position. Plasmorta said he would convince Commissioner Emblemson, which he did the next day by, once again, kidnapping him and chaining him upside down in his cave. After Commissioner Emblemson agreed Plasmorta set him free again. The AME Committee members in charge of Commissioner Emblemson's safety were subsequently fired.

Plasmorta, twenty members of The Oglician Order, all dressed in black jerseys, black shorts, and black cleats, and Heartin, along with twenty members of The Flyer and Everforce Connection Organizations, all wearing blue jerseys, red shorts, and blue cleats, including Astrinae, Zearcher, Doggle, Hooligan, and Cursor, converged at The Crater-Ball Field, a sixty yard crater, that sat in the desert plain behind The Kabrin Hall of The Great Crater. Twenty thousand Solareen citizens surrounded the crater to watch the event. There was a special addition to Heartin’s team that revealed himself before the start of the match. Heartin would get the chance to play with his hero Elonium. Elonium flew to the edge of the crater where the competitors awaited the beginning of the competition and gifted Heartin with a

pair of blue and white Elonium Heartin Tagger sneakers. They were a pair of high-tops with slits cut into the fronts which left room for Heartin’s toenails to poke through freely. Heartin and Elonium were both represented by black silhouetted images, of them flying through the air, printed on the sides of the shoes. There was an image of a gold lynx printed on the back of the shoe, right above the heel. Heartin took off his white Eloniums and put his feet into the new pair of Elonium Heartin Taggers. Heartin happily wiggled his feet around in the shoes for a moment before Plasmorta provided a glowing foot-long silver moon-rock to use as the crater ball in the race.

The object of the crater-ball race was to have a runner get the crater ball to the center of the crater ring, that was designated by a red ten-yard circle painted on the ground in the middle of the crater, and then back up to the edge of the crater. The opposing players attempted to tackle the runner with the crater ball before they could return to the top of the crater while the runner’s teammates blocked, creating a running path for the runner. If the runner was tackled three times before reaching the top of the crater the other team would get a chance to run with the crater. If the runner dropped the crater ball, the opposing team was given the opportunity to retrieve the crater ball and had to return it to the top of the crater before making an attempt at traveling the ball to the center and back to the top. Completing the trip to the center and back to the top counted as a score and the runner's team would be awarded one point. The team that was first to score seven points was the winner. The players were allowed to pass the crater ball to their teammates, making the recipient of the pass the new runner. There was no flying allowed.

Wakulla, Commissioner Emblemson, Rawra, Professor Craddleson, Enchantra, thirty Oglicians, including Leodus, thirty Flyers, and thirty Everforcers, and all fifty AME Committee members, including Ambassador Burtonin, watched the match from stands in the desert around the crater. The representatives of forty media outlets were standing in front of the crowd operating thirty-two high definition glass recording tablets that would transmit the competition to viewers across the galaxy. Four officials, in grey and white uniforms, stood at different points of the craters edge.

Heartin started with the moon rock first. The twenty Everforce and Flyer team members ran for the center of the crater while Plasmorta and the Oglicians ran up the crater walls from the center. The two forces clashed on the walls of the crater. Heartin ran down the crater wall with the crater ball in hand as his teammates blocked. He was tackled three times before reaching the center. The Oglicians were given the crater ball and Plasmorta took the crater ball back to the top of the crater and the next possession began. Plasmorta ran down the walls of the crater as Oglicians blocked. Plasmorta made his way to the center without being tackled, but was taken to the ground before making it back to the top. Plasmorta stood with the moon rock in one hand and ran his way to the top of the crater. The Oglicians of the crowd cheered. Plasmorta had scored a point for The Oglician Order.

Heartin’s team was given the crater ball at the top of the crater and Heartin took the moon rock. The next possession began and Heartin took off down the wall of the crater. Heartin came close to being tackled with the crater ball, but tossed it to Cursor before he hit the ground. Cursor barreled through

opponents and made it to the bottom of the crater before turning around and heading back up the wall. Fourteen Oglicians pulled Cursor to the ground, but before he landed he tossed the crater ball to Heartin who caught it with only one Oglician to beat to the top of the crater. Heartin jumped up high over the tackling Oglician and made it to the top of the crater. Wakulla, Commissioner Emblemson, Rawra, Professor Craddleson and Enchantra all cheered along with the other Flyers and Everforcers.

The Oglicians took possession of the crater ball and the cycle continued until, finally, Heartin returned the crater ball to the top of the crater one last time, giving Heartin's team a one point victory over Plasmorta and The Oglician Order. The winners celebrated and Wakulla gave Heartin a big kiss on the lips. Chancellor Emblemson, Rawra, Professor Craddleson, and Cursor looked on admiring the new couple. Plasmorta, at least for the time being, accepted defeat to uphold the traditions of the tournament. Plasmorta gifted Heartin with a necklace holding the blue and white piece of the Holy Rock from the pillar of Plasmorta's cave, as a prize for winning the crater ball race. Commissioner Emblemson had a gift for Heartin as well. Emblemson gave Heartin the purple fossil used in his creation, having had it retrieved from its place in the AllEarth laboratory. Plasmorta congratulated Heartin and Wakulla and promised he would return some day. "We are divine siblings now and forevermore, "Plasmorta mentioned before going back to his cave and then to his spaceship, which he used to travel back and forth to the moon, and continued to look down and watch over Earth and his two siblings that had fallen in love. Plasmorta still intended to find a way to make his vision of a traditionally

respective society come to fruition, but he would have to wait. Plasmorta sat patiently and formulated new plans from his ship on the moon.

Professor Craddleson offered Cursor an endorsement from the Pollydroop Corporation to play for the Pollydroop Martians, a professional Crater Ball League team. Cursor excepted. He would finally receive the attention his incredible abilities deserved. Heartin gave Wakulla the necklace holding the Holy Rock and she put it around her neck. The Holy Rock glistened in the moonlight. Heartin and Wakulla returned to their separate homes and prepared for the restart of The AME Competition. Within and Surge called Heartin, from a transmitting station, while he was at home in The Dozenth. “We received a new part for our ship from an anonymous sender,” Winton explained. “It was some sort of beautiful miracle really,” Surge said. Plasmorta was aware of their situation and sent an autonomous messenger ship, carrying a new panel, out to the Statocene quarter where it found Wintin and Surge’s ship. They planned to abandon the rest of the exploration and even though the trip would take at least four or five months they were very excited and undoubtedly on their way home. Heartin talked with his parents and explained the events of the last few days. Winton and Surge were both ecstatic and a little confused. They were under the impression that the fossil they chose to create Heartin was that of a raptor. They fed and raised Heartin as such. Heartin understood the circumstances of the mishap and thanked his parents for choosing to make a reeptilorm child. Heartin told his parents he was in love with Wakulla and the two of them gave Heartin their blessing to do what he pleased. The amore of Galaxia’s life current had truly

prevailed. Wintin and Surge told Heartin they loved him and ended the transmission.

The AME Tournament continued a few days later with repairs to The Combat Stadium and courageous athletes winning magnificent cash prizes. Enchantra led a celebration at the beginning of the restart of the competition. The Solareen police officers and emergency responders were honored during the celebration, along with the families of the seven citizens who lost their lives, as a fifty person marching band played music and entertained the crowd. Wakulla was given the chance to perform with Enchantra who offered to take her on as her protégé. Wakulla, wearing a flowing blue and orange dress, danced in a small four enure cylindrical pool near the center of Grass Field Auditorium B while Enchantra slid and spun around the field on her shell. Shanina and Vershna performed as well. Shanina used her electric body to dazzle the crowd and Vershna juggled her fireballs. Wakulla and Heartin said the magic words, “Desiife Molderni Arour”, transformed, and flew around the stadium hand in hand. Heartin was then given a Captain certification and Wakulla, an Athlete certification, for their efforts during the attack. Wakulla and Heartin went on to study at Solareen University before beginning their careers. Wakulla then started dancing in water shows all over Galaxia and Heartin became a great Captain. Heartin eventually bought a red Pollydroop Vroomer and a glass pocket tablet that he used to stay in constant contact with Wakulla. He also got a dog, a little white terrier that he named Plasma. Heartin and Wakulla spent the next few years contemplating their true purpose and falling in love while the tradition of AME Tournament competition continued on.

The efforts of the citizens of Solareen that year were examples of the originative connections shared by living creatures and the surrounding galaxy making use of the extended current of shared atoms and electrons that work in unison to perpetuate its powerful purpose allowing the frequency of which to flow through the universe, from the stars, to the planets, and then to the galaxy's inhabiting creatures. Burning celestial objects floating in space aligned themselves to cause a string of interspecies collisions with a materializing supernatural effect. The future of Galaxia dared to rest its fate on the breaths and backs of humans using their scientific inclinations and natural instinctual dispositions to fulfill a desire for exploration and discovery with a domino effect leading to the rapid increase of evolutionarily advanced beings and alternative healing options for humans in need. The resulting fruits of these virtuous accomplishments are measured out in pounds, ounces, liters, and grams, and audaciously rationed out to the creatures that have planted themselves on the landscape of the great rocky planet formations that serve as stages to the stories of every mind capable of perceiving, comprehending and expressing thoughts of that labor. Little did Heartin know that his ancestry would lead to a responsibility to uphold the positive image of the enhanced human. He was being closely watched by members of the community and every step he took after his first meeting with Plasmorta became metaphorical stories with intrinsic influences that affected the political narratives of Solareen meaning the general public took it upon themselves to anonymously mold Heartin’s mind and Captain career like a piece of hot Pollydroop in an effort to create an artistically contrived mode of spiritual communication that could be of assistance in further enhanced human to human interrelations. Heartin was unaware of just how

detailed and critical the verbiage of this rich tradition would be in his daily life and felt attacked by society at times which affected his mental health and slowed his physical progression in regards to controlling his body and consciousness when in his full reeptilorm form. Heartin's journey would often be interpreted with various perceptions by the citizens of Solareen and without a general consensus on the actual meaning of the written passages, commonly accepted unwritten laws, and the artistic language that outlined their limitations, Heartin's social interactions were awkwardly left to the whims and wondering interests of the general public. The wording and possible intentions of the first policy initiatives and native laws provided by the gods would play a pivotal role in forming the structure of Solareen living. This gave the city a colorful poetic history with a heavenly aura that shone through its bright glowing crystal quercus, mutated fruits, and the gleaming eyes of the enhanced humans that occupied the Solareen streets.

The city of Solareen is just one of many cities on Earth filled with faithful citizens working to create an unfindable utopian existence in which the very pursuit of entices and then satisfies every curious soul. The contents and aesthetics of the galactic vacuum and the spaces therein have made themselves visible to us with the intention of being perceived and praised. The human need to replace one’s self with the eternal and overall decisive authority of the members of that furnishing is the contradictory mentality that puzzles otherwise all knowing minds. The limitations of personal thought lay within a reasonably constricted dimension to allow a freedom of controllable variables giving life to the theory of cause and effect.

Love lives within the limitations of that and every other dimension. Alternate realities have the same allowance and the essence of the resulting feeling remains constant throughout the fluidity of the surrounding presets. Religious and spiritual contrivances of mystics and praying hopefuls create meaningful ritualistic moments with appropriate metaphorical culminations that arrive at the doorsteps of inspiration. Those with life adjust themselves to the allotted amount of lucidity we embrace in choosing how we maneuver through time’s wires that string together and form a larger unified image that includes the absence of impossibility in its existence. The only comparable delivery of this creationary property would be an eternal life that can't be seen with the eye, but felt with energy’s force. People, upon birth, receive an impression of an emotional influence that sensationalizes itself in the form of hopes and dreams that leave its imprint on the heart. Though one can never really fully control or boss around all of the stars that shine within the walls of the galaxy, findings of consecutive anomalies with lasting memories that live a slightly modified life from their original counterparts come as treasures to the speech and physical activity of organisms capable of perceiving and experiencing them.

If we continue trending in the right direction then we will eventually exceed the expectations of dreamed paradisiacal and utopian predictions and enter an initially incomparable standard of life that will reset the galaxy's capacity to have a new Genesis with seeds of perfection birthed into its dwellings. Heartin's story can be observed with a magnified interest in the mental and physical health of bodies circulating fluids of essentiality. Events and incidents are given lasting attention due to the possible evidence of their importance in history and the effects they have

on the occupants of any given civilization. The trade of knowledge of these experiences is held with great regard and the lack thereof has unfortunate consequences according to community implementation and acceptance. The language used to communicate thoughts of insisted actions and reactions can be misconstrued as a cause of their spectrum of religious meaning. Tradition plays a large part in coming to a consensus when legislating the dividends of society's progression meaning what sounds correct eventually becomes just that. Once a consensus has been found it lives on through generations of living communicative organisms and a missing brick in that holy road can cause a dangerously painful hole that could trip travelers on life’s path in search of the eternal light energy that fuels our lives. In billions of years Heartin, Wakulla, Cursor, Plasmorta and the citizens of Solareen will be long forgotten, but their efforts will push neighboring societal happenings into fruition and their stories will inspire similar effects in perception and therefore cause a ripple effect that bounces from one being to another, connecting us all in this beautifully dreary existence.

The End